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MAN IN ART

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STUDIES IN RELIGIOUS AND HISTORICAL ART, PORTRAIT, AND GENRE

BY

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ETC., ETC., ETC.

WITH FORTY-SIX PLATES IN LINE-ENGRAVING, MEZZOTINT, PHOTOGRAVURE, HYALOGRAPHY, ETCHING, AND WOOD-ENGRAVING

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PREFACE

AMONGST publications on the fine arts the expensive illustrated volume has a place of its own, entirely beyond rivalry in its department. This is due to the possibility of costly illustration, and especially of costly plate-printing, so that the text of a book of this kind may be accompanied by illustrations of a quality superior to that which is attainable by cheap printing in large numbers. This is the real artistic reason for the existence of these books which appear to be (I know not why) almost offensive to some critics. Perhaps it is the material costliness that displeases them; but unfortunately it so happens that material costliness is almost inseparable from the perfect presentation of works of art. The picture requires a gilded frame; picture and frame together require a handsome, almost a palatial room. In the same way a collection of fine book-illustrations involves some extravagance in the paper and print, not only of the illustrations themselves, but of the text which is associated with them. There is a luxury in these matters that is false and foolish, and a luxury that is genuine and wise. False luxury consists either in giving many illustrations when the quality is inferior, like the numerous dishes of an inferior French dinner, all which together are not worth a well-cooked mutton-chop, or else in wasting money on idle ornament—such as an elaborate and expensive border round a worthless engraving. True luxury, *le luxe de bon aloi*, consists, first, in the quality of the work of art itself, and, when that has been secured, in a full sufficiency of those material adjuncts which are necessary to exhibit it to perfection. The finest engraving cannot look well unless it is carefully printed on good paper, and with a sufficient, though not an excessive, margin; and it is plain that when the utmost has

been done for the illustrations, the typography of the text must be in harmony with them. This leads inevitably to an expensive book, and the more surely that although with a known author and good illustrations the publisher may calculate with some certainty upon a moderate sale, he may not permit himself any illusory expectations of a large one. This is how it comes to pass that the desire for what is best in illustration leads the publisher to two consequences—the high price, and the limited edition. In the case of the present work the edition is even more limited than those of the author's previous works of the same class, except the third edition of *Etching and Etchers.*

Regrets have often been expressed, both by reviewers and readers, that my books are not made accessible to purchasers of small means. It is a regret that I share myself; indeed, I am so far from taking any pride in the material or market value of my works that it would be a pleasure to me to see them circulating in half-crown editions; but it has always been my practice to leave questions of price to the knowledge and experience of publishers. The habit of reading in the easy chair, instead of at the reading-desk, according to the practice of students in less self-indulgent times, has led our contemporaries to look upon any volume heavier than a manual as a thing physically unmanageable. It is therefore much to an author's interest in these days to avoid ponderous volumes, and the book that is made large and heavy for the sake of noble illustrations is likely to be less read than the literature of the railway bookstall. There remains, however, always the possibility of a few readers, severe and critical in proportion to the smallness of their numbers and the special nature of their interest in the subject; and besides this, there is the prospect of less expensive reprints in the future, which in my own case is a certainty in America, and almost a certainty in England. One cannot, therefore, afford to treat these expensive books lightly as if they were mere letter-press, written to accompany illustrations; and for my part, I have always taken as much pains about them, and written them as carefully, as if they were bought only to be read, like *French and English*, or *The Intellectual Life.*

I notice that the most prevalent way of criticising what is itself a work of criticism is to point to the omissions in the book and the narrowness of the author's mind. The anxiety to escape from the charge of omission is disastrous to literature, because it leads to mere recapitulation of what has been said already elsewhere, and to the insertion of so many names, dates, and titles of works, that the book ceases to be readable and becomes no better than a mere catalogue. Under a title so inclusive as that given to the present volume, a very comprehensive series of historical tables might be devised, with memoranda by way of illustration, that would be useful for occasional reference. Any attempt to write a full and accurately proportioned history of the representation of human beings in the graphic and plastic arts would be a work of simple literary industry that I might, perhaps, have got through as well as anybody else. The literature that affects to be completely inclusive, impersonal, and impartial, the literature that pretends to know everything, is a mechanical business requiring method and access to a great library. It would be fortunate for a critic if he were naturally catholic in his tastes, but the virtue would go out of his writing if he tried to say everything that might be said. Criticism is as personal as the art of painting itself, and as painting has its negative side in the art or practice of omission, so criticism passes over everything that is not, for the moment, the material exactly needed for its own work. It is a mistake to try to be impersonal in criticism—to write without consulting one's own tastes and in reference to some abstract standard of taste which could never be anything more certain than some temporary phase of an ever-changing public opinion. Still, it is possible for tastes that appear at first sight contradictory to unite themselves in the same individual. I am conscious of a keen delight in the liberty of the best linear etching, and also of a profound satisfaction, of a different nature yet equally sincere, in the stern perfection of discipline maintained in the finest linear engraving, the line, in the two cases, having qualities which are not only quite different, but opposite and incompatible. So I have always intensely enjoyed the wildest nature—that which has never been modified by man; but as for gardening, I prefer that which is most severely and visibly regulated by the discipline of art. On the other

hand, I am conscious of preferring painting to sculpture of equal excellence —a preference almost universal in our English race, which is far more graphic than plastic in its artistic tendencies. We cannot help this narrowness, and we may console ourselves with the reflection that the ancient Greeks, whose practical gift for sculpture was probably accompanied by an appreciation of it more intelligent than ours, were blind to forms of art that we thoroughly understand. It is likely that they had a closer sympathy with the art of Phidias than any which is possible for us; but there is no probability that Phidias himself could have appreciated the qualities of a Rembrandt, a Constable, or a Turner.

I may, perhaps, take this opportunity of explaining that there is a sort of general scheme or plan in my writings on art which are intended to cover the whole field, so far as I have time or opportunity for exploring it. The *Graphic Arts* frankly took the technical side, and so, with reference to a special art, did *Etching and Etchers*. *Landscape*, and *Imagination in Landscape Painting*, quitted the technical ground for other considerations. The present work advances to the study of the art that deals with Man. The title has been purposely left sufficiently comprehensive to permit reference to all the varieties of art in which Man is represented—a liberty that will afford opportunities for comparison, traversing technical differences. This work is not intended to be, in its essence, technical, and what there is of technicality in it has been collected together in separate chapters for the convenience both of the student who wishes to know where to find it, and of the general reader who prays to be delivered from it.

As the book is not technical, so it is not written with any purpose of inculcating a doctrine or advocating a reform. If the reader will think over what has been effected by art-criticism, he will discover that no critic has ever accomplished any revolution or even reformation of a permanent kind either in the practice of artists or in the taste of the public. When a critic appears to be most influential he happens (by a coincidence of his own tastes and desires with those of militant contemporary artists) to accompany some movement in art, and to make himself its literary spokesman. In this way he may help the movement, but he cannot turn the currents of art into

new channels. They are set in motion by mysterious causes; they last only for a time, and always ultimately spend themselves. All we know about them is that they belong to fashion, like the arts of dress. But, through all its vicissitudes, art itself survives, and its subject of most unfailing interest is Man. It studies him, idealises him, portrays him with careful fidelity, or makes him ridiculous by caricature; but unless compelled to abstinence by an irresistible religious authority it never neglects him. The love of landscape or the love of animals may lead this or that artist away from the great central subject of study, it never leads away a whole school. The majority of famous artists, in every country and in every age, have given their best efforts to the representation of human beings, and made all else subservient to that. And such is the keenness of the interest which the human race takes in itself and in its doings, that it has never yet grown weary of seeing itself represented even in the most trivial acts of its existence. The human world may lose all faith in its gods, it will never cease to be interested in itself; it will never lose its curiosity about the drama of earthly life, with its contrasts of splendour and poverty, of health and disease, of gaiety and sorrow.

SCHOOLS OF ART

MORE OR LESS REPRESENTED IN THE ILLUSTRATIONS

SCULPTURE. Egyptian, Greek, Græco-Roman, French, Italian, English.

PAINTING. Italian, Spanish, Dutch, French, English.

DRAWING. English, French, Spanish.

MEZZOTINT-ENGRAVING. English.

LINE-ENGRAVING. German, French.

ETCHING FROM PICTURES. English, French.

ORIGINAL ETCHING. Dutch.

ORIGINAL WOOD-ENGRAVING. French, Japanese.

DRAWING FROM THE ANTIQUE. English and French. (The work was done by advanced students kindly recommended by Mr. CALDERON of the Royal Academy, and Professor MÜNTZ of the *École des Beaux-Arts*.)

THE ILLUSTRATIONS

A STATEMENT having been made by an influential review that I submit to be "bound hand and foot" by illustrations supplied by publishers, I will explain how the illustration of my books is usually managed. It may happen, though it has never happened to me, that a publisher, already the owner of a number of plates, invites an author to write a text intended to serve as an accompaniment. I remember a case of this kind in France when a publisher, having at his disposal a quantity of plates that had served to illustrate a catalogue, asked a well-known French critic to write an essay that might unite them in the form of a book. The critic was a skilful literary workman, and so contrived that the plates, for any one not in the secret or not initiated in the book-trade, might seem to have been ordered as illustrations of his essay. Cleverness of this kind is scarcely compatible with whatever little dignity may belong to the business of authorship, for the writer affects to be playing the first violin in a duet where his real position is that of a second. When the writer does take a secondary position he should do it frankly by writing notes that are obviously explanatory and subordinate — as, for example, those by Mr. Wornum on engravings from pictures in the National Gallery. Or, again, a publisher may wish to select pictures that will engrave well and be popular, and yet at the same time he may want the text to be as good literary work as he can get. In that case no intelligent publisher would spoil the text by forcing the writer to allude inconveniently to works out of the line of his argument. The author would have to preserve his own independence by saying what he had to say without troubling himself about

the illustrations. This used to be done by M. Albert Wolff in his annual publication on the *Salon*, and in such a case the illustrations bear no real proportion to the text, which often passes over them slightly, and dwells on other works not reproduced, whilst the notices of pictures are often so far away from the reproductions that there is no visible connection between them. All systems of illustration are inadequate unless the text is strictly limited to notes on the engravings themselves; forasmuch as the engravings can only be a selection of a very few things when the author has alluded to many. To remedy this inconvenience illustrations have sometimes been so multiplied that there is one to every paragraph, almost to every sentence, and the temptation to this multiplicity is the greater in our time that we have processes by which plausible, though often defective, representations of works of art can be printed in the text itself. Reproductions of this kind have a certain documentary value, and this is the reason why historians of art are unable to resist the temptation to give them in deplorable abundance. For the class of illustrations that may be called documentary, the simple outline, as employed in the handbooks to painting published by Mr. Murray, is still much less offensive than the bad process-block, that pretends to give the tone and texture of the original picture, whilst it falsifies and vulgarises both. Some critics may answer this with a *tu quoque*, as there are process-blocks in my French *Life of Turner*, which answer exactly to this unfavourable description; but the truth is that my share in the illustration of that book was confined to the selection and superintendence of the simple linear illustrations that reproduce fairly well for typographic printing, and are certainly not offensive. It was the French publishers who, in their eagerness to make the illustrations numerous and effective, added the "tint-blocks," as they are called, which I dislike, and have good reasons for disliking. This is absolutely the only instance in my experience when a publisher has inserted illustrations in a book of mine against my own judgment, and even in this case there was no obligation to make the text conform itself to the blocks. Mr. Seeley has often interfered negatively by declining proposals of mine for some reason of his own, but he has never supplied me with illustrations to be inserted against my will,

or asked me to turn the course of my writing aside that they might be brought in. Messrs. Macmillan and Messrs. Adam and Charles Black simply allow me a sum of money for the illustration of a book, and leave me to lay it out in my own way. This system is satisfactory to an author, because it enables him to follow out a definite scheme of his own; but he pays for this satisfaction by a burdensome increase of labour and responsibility, which nobody but a publisher can understand. As to the present volume I had to decide from the beginning whether the illustrations were to be explanatory and documentary, or to have a value of their own. For the explanatory illustration of a work like this I should have had recourse to pen-drawings or sketches, entirely linear and clearly reproduced, to print with the text. I would have had no confused and much reduced typographic representations of engravings or pictures. Much might have been done by simple linear work, and it would have thrown many side-lights upon the text; but there is now this fatal objection to pen-drawings reproduced as blocks, that however admirably the drawings themselves may have been executed, and however accurately they may be reproduced, they must always have been irremediably cheapened beforehand by the illustrated papers and exhibition catalogues, and also by comparatively cheap illustrated books. It is only the most philosophical minds that value what can be had for a small sum of money, and what is already possessed by thousands. An excellent pen-drawing is better as a work of art than an etching not quite so well drawn, but the etching is likely to be more *precious*—that is, to fetch a higher *price*, and to be esteemed according to the price that it will fetch. I observe that in the reviews of illustrated books there is little discrimination between good and indifferent process-blocks; the reviewer usually passes with the same indifference the excellent ones that delight an artist and the dreadful ones that make him shudder; or else, from mere weariness of their multiplicity, he condemns them all, without form of trial, in a sentence. I remember that when my Saône voyage was published it was illustrated by process-blocks from pen-drawings chiefly by Mr. Pennell, and one reviewer affirmed that the drawings, which he had never seen, had been badly reproduced. Mr. Pennell had seen

them, having made them, and his opinion was that the reproductions, by their clearness and soundness of line, were of superlative excellence.

In illustrating the present volume it has been decided to economise the cost of process-blocks in the text, notwithstanding their utility as memoranda, and to make the outlay on plates. I regret that, in the nature of things, these cannot be more numerous, and I know that forty or fifty plates can be no more than an accompaniment to a text in which many more works of art are alluded to. This, however, is inevitably, in some degree, the defect of all book-illustrations whatever, unless in scientific works, like Bentham's *British Flora*, when every plant has its own clear and simple wood-cut, showing leaf, and flower, and seed. Nobody could so completely illustrate a poem, a novel, or a book of travels on that principle. There is, moreover, this to be said in behalf of a book of art-criticism, that as it constantly guides the reader's attention to works of art outside of itself, it provides indirectly for its own illustration. Some of the most successful works in art-criticism published in England, France, Germany, and Italy have appeared without any illustrations whatever.

I therefore decided that the illustrations should be valuable in themselves, without any pretension to an impossible completeness, and that the text should not be in the slightest degree cramped or turned out of its own course by any anxiety about including direct references to the illustrations. Most people will turn over the pages and look at the plates; they will, I hope, find an interesting and varied collection. A few (my particular friends) will read the text, and I have done my best for them independently of the plates.

Some of the plates are called "hyalographs," which may deserve a few words of explanation. A hyalograph is a drawing on glass—not common ground glass, but dispolished for the purpose with a very fine and even grain. The instruments used are chiefly the lead-pencil, the stump, and a brush charged with more or less diluted Indian ink. The drawing is transferred by light to a sensitized etching-ground, though the camera is not employed and there can be no reduction. The process was invented by M. Dujardin, the well-known héliograveur, and employed for scientific

purposes. It has scarcely been used hitherto for fine art, because the drawing, in every case, has to be made expressly on the glass, so that no drawing by an old master can be *reproduced* in this way; it can only be *copied*. The process is, however, excellent for original work, because the reproduction, being so very direct, loses less than by any other process known to me—in fact, the loss is almost imperceptible, which cannot be said for any other photographic process. In the hyalograph the intervention of photography is reduced to a minimum—the passage of light through the glass. The plate is bitten like an aquatint. The entire liberty of correction enjoyed by the artist whilst drawing the hyalograph, and its extreme fidelity to the work of the draughtsman, make it very agreeable to artists and most easily adaptable to all the varieties of personal idiosyncrasy. Three artists have produced hyalographs for this volume, and their different idiosyncrasies are as strongly marked as if they had etched directly on the copper. It is my belief that the hyalograph might be excellent for landscape on account of the truthfulness with which it reproduces the most delicate tones, the freedom of its linear expression, and the rich, deep quality of its darker shades. I hope to try some experiments with it in landscape effect, but have been hitherto prevented by more pressing engagements and occupations.

The reader may perhaps wonder why I have had drawings made from sculpture at all when it can be so easily photographed. No doubt the direct photography of sculpture is more authentic, but there is a charm in a drawing due to the skill of the draughtsman, and I had a little secondary scheme in the illustration of this volume; I wished it to illustrate still further what I have written elsewhere about the graphic arts. The book is, in fact, a little school of graphic art in itself, containing drawings from the antique, etchings from pictures, examples of line-engraving in metal and on wood, with reproductions of pictures and original drawings by different kinds of photogravure and héliogravure. Some of the reproductions have offered considerable difficulty, and have either been attempted more than once or else entirely abandoned. Here I wish to thank Messrs. Macmillan for allowing me the costly liberty of withholding from publica-

tion plates that did not finally come up to the expected standard. A negative decision in these things, as in most things, is quite as important as a positive one ; it is as desirable to keep a defective plate out of a book as to strengthen the volume by inserting a perfect one.

There is another matter on which a few words may be said. The great majority of the illustrations in this volume are hitherto unpublished, but I have admitted a few plates that have already appeared on the Continent on condition that they were excellent of their kind, and that they had not been in the slightest degree deteriorated by use. I do not think that the book loses so much as it gains by a few arrangements of this kind. For example, there are some plates by old masters, and I might easily have had these reproduced specially for the present work ; but as M. Amand-Durand had already made reproductions of unsurpassable excellence, and as his plates have been regularly steeled and preserved with the utmost care, they are in the same state as when first bitten, so that it would have been a foolish plan to order new ones likely to be inferior. I therefore preferred to buy from M. Amand-Durand the right to print an edition from his own coppers, and this has been done by his own printer, who has charge of them. Let me give another example. I had commissioned a plate from the picture of St. Monica and St. Augustine by Ary Scheffer, and after it was executed I discovered that a print publisher had given a commission to M. Didier for a line-engraving of the same picture. M. Didier is one of the very few engravers still living whose work is comparable to that of the great masters of his art. His engraving of Scheffer's picture is quite of the highest quality now to be had in the world, and as soon as I saw it I at once determined to purchase, if possible, the right to print an edition, whilst sacrificing our own plate entirely. It would be easy to represent the insertion of M. Didier's plate as a parsimonious arrangement, but it was exactly the reverse. The line-engraving by M. Flameng of "Œdipus and the Sphinx," after Moreau, appeared some years ago in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*. The copper is in the most perfect condition, and it seemed to me better to have this plate, which is one of the very few examples of severe modern line-engraving on simple old principles, than to order, let

us say, an etching which would not have been half so well adapted to the classical sense of the subject. There is nothing new in this occasional admission of plates already published when their interest makes them desirable. In the first edition of *Etching and Etchers* I admitted many plates by old and modern masters that had been printed in their lifetimes, and in the third edition there were many of Amand-Durand's reproductions.

It is time that we all accustomed ourselves to regard the question of impressions in a new light. The invention of steeling has taken away the reason for prejudices that still survive, and are cunningly traded upon by the unscrupulous. As plates are protected now, all copies printed from the steeled surface are equally good. The only distinction of any real importance is between impressions taken from the bare copper and those from the steel afterwards laid upon it as a protective armour. It is not that the steel fills up even the finest lines—it is too thin to do that—but the bare copper gives a richer and pleasanter quality to the proof. It is time that public credulity should cease to let itself be imposed upon by "proofs before letters," which can be made at any time by simply de-steeling the plate and effacing the inscription. The only real evidence of early proofs is the width of the copper margin. If the margin was wide for large-paper copies, and reduced before subsequent editions were printed, the early proofs may be recognised at once by their plate-marks.

It would have been a pleasure to me to give more encouragement to original etching and engraving of all kinds, but the practical difficulties are almost insuperable. One can commission an engraving from a picture and have some idea of what it is likely to be; but it is impossible to foresee, with the freakish spirit of experiment now prevalent in modern art, what an engraver (or etcher) is likely at a given moment to produce from his own unaided invention. The artist himself does not know what he will do. "The etcher," says Professor Herkomer, "is under a spell whilst at work, for he is not wholly conscious of the actual character of the work he is doing; but by an inexplicable sub-conscious action of the brain, which amounts to a spell, his hand produces something that his plain every-day wakeful mind could not have devised or done by cold calculative effort.

Thus it is that all (original) etching must be uncertain, as it can never be subjected to conditions that are measurable or wholly under control." The only safe way of getting original work is to select it from what is already executed and still in the artist's possession. This is why we give commissions for etchings from pictures. I should prefer original work if it had always equal interest, and could be produced with equal certainty—but it cannot.

There is an omission that I regret. There ought to have been one or two illustrations of fighting. Combats painted by the old masters are usually studio compositions in which every man and horse acts with proper consideration for the artistic arrangement. They have no real interest for me. The best military pictures are French and German illustrations of the last war, but I thought it prudent to keep French soldiers out of the book, as I am so often accused of being a "Gallophile," an unpopular personage in England. I had several German or English works in view, but there was always some practical difficulty or objection. Meanwhile time slipped on, and whilst I was still seeking it became necessary to close the list. I regret it, but the delays and disappointments attending a selection of this kind never end until the publication of the volume.

CONTENTS

PART I

Culture

CHAPTER I

PAGE

INTRODUCTORY 3

CHAPTER II

THE EDUCATION OF THE FIGURE-PAINTER—LITERARY 6

CHAPTER III

THE EDUCATION OF THE FIGURE-PAINTER—SCIENTIFIC . . . 17

CHAPTER IV

THE EDUCATION OF THE FIGURE-PAINTER—TECHNICAL . . . 25

CHAPTER V

THE STUDY OF THE NUDE 33

CHAPTER VI

CLOTHING AND NAKEDNESS IN FINISHED ART 40

CHAPTER VII

AMATEURSHIP IN THE STUDY OF THE FIGURE 45

CHAPTER VIII

CULTURE GOING BEYOND NATURE 53

PART II

Beauty

CHAPTER I

PAGE
The Idea of Beauty 59

CHAPTER II

Beauty and Interest 65

CHAPTER III

Beauty and Unity 68

CHAPTER IV

Beauty and Custom 71

CHAPTER V

Beauty and Sumptuousness 74

CHAPTER VI

The Analogies of Beauty 78

CHAPTER VII

The Human Claim to Supreme Beauty 82

CHAPTER VIII

The Variety of Artistic Interests in Man 88

PART III

Religious Art

CHAPTER I

Of Gods, Men, and Monsters 95

CHAPTER II

PAGE

Pictorial Representations of Deity 103

CHAPTER III

The Earliest Christian Art 107

CHAPTER IV

The Primitive Device of giving Importance by Size . . . 109

CHAPTER V

Intellect and Sympathy in Early Christian Art . . . 111

CHAPTER VI

Material Luxury in Mediæval Religious Art 116

CHAPTER VII

Of the Quality called "Holiness" in Art 121

CHAPTER VIII

The Archaic Element in Sacred Art 125

CHAPTER IX

The Incompatibility between Realism and Religion . . . 128

CHAPTER X

On Truth to Fact in the Illustration of the Bible . . . 131

CHAPTER XI

Raphael's Principle in Biblical Illustration 134

CHAPTER XII

The Influence of Roman Catholicism on Religious Art . . 139

CHAPTER XIII

The Influence of Protestantism on Religious Art . . 143

CHAPTER XIV

PAGE

PROTESTANT ART—REMBRANDT 147

CHAPTER XV

THE EFFECT OF UNBELIEF UPON RELIGIOUS ART 152

CHAPTER XVI

RELIGIOUS ART FROM LIFE 157

PART IV

History and Revivals

CHAPTER I

THE DESCENT OF MAN 163

CHAPTER II

THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN ART AND ARCHÆOLOGY 171

CHAPTER III

DIGNIFIED AND RATIONAL VIEWS OF HISTORICAL ART . . . 179

CHAPTER IV

IMAGINATION IN HISTORICAL PAINTING 186

CHAPTER V

STYLE IN HISTORICAL PAINTING 191

CHAPTER VI

HISTORICAL GENRE 197

CHAPTER VII

BIOGRAPHY IN PAINTING 203

PART V

Portrait

CHAPTER I

PAGE

The Rank of Portraiture in the Arts 211

CHAPTER II

Painting and Carving the Soul 224

CHAPTER III

The Religious Portrait 232

CHAPTER IV

The Analogy between Portrait and Landscape 236

CHAPTER V

Evils of Elaboration in Portraiture 240

CHAPTER VI

The Portraiture of Pride 243

CHAPTER VII

Portraiture without Pretension 250

CHAPTER VIII

Imaginary Portraits 259

CHAPTER IX

The Body in Portrait 262

CHAPTER X

The Hair and Beard in Portrait 269

PART VI

Life Observed

CHAPTER I

PAGE
THE FIGURE IN LANDSCAPE 281

CHAPTER II

OF RUSTIC LIFE 287

CHAPTER III

TECHNICAL CONDITIONS OF BUCOLIC ART 302

CHAPTER IV

WAR 311

CHAPTER V

WAR IDEALISED 320

CHAPTER VI

SOLDIERS IN PEACE 326

CHAPTER VII

NOBLES AND CITIZENS IN PEACE 328

EPILOGUE 333

INDEX 341

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	TO FACE PAGE
HEAD OF A DEITY OR KING, Egyptian, drawn by F. Walenn	2
HERCULES REPOSING, Græco-Roman Marble, drawn by F. Walenn	22
THE LAUGHING FAUN, Greek Marble, drawn by G. de Roton	28
MARSYAS, Greek Bronze, drawn by F. Walenn	34
SILENUS, original Wood-Engraving, by Pierre Gusman	36
A BISHOP, by Sir John Gilbert, R.A. Héliogravure	40
STUDY OF A GIRL, by Alma Tadema, R.A. Héliogravure	50
THE VENUS OF ARLES, Greek Marble, drawn by G. de Roton	60
APHRODITE, Bronze Mask, drawn by T. E. MACKLIN	64
PORTRAITS OF AN OLD MAN AND A CHILD, by D. Ghirlandajo; etched by H. Manesse	66
WOMAN SCOURING A PAN, by G. Schalcken; etched by C. O. Murray	70
TASTE, by Gonzales Coques; etched by G. W. Rhead	78
A CONTRAST, by Sir F. Leighton, P.R.A. Héliogravure	82
THE WIDOWER, by Luke Fildes, R.A.; etched by G. W. Rhead	90
MERCURY, Bronze, by Rude, drawn by G. de Roton	94
SATYR PLAYING WITH INFANT BACCHUS, Græco-Roman Marble, drawn by T. E. Macklin	98
ŒDIPUS, by Gustave Moreau; engraved by L. Flameng	102
THE BLOOD OF THE REDEEMER, by G. Bellini. Photogravure	110
ST. MONICA AND ST. AUGUSTINE, by Ary Scheffer; engraved by A. Didier	122
ST. ANTHONY AND ST. GEORGE, by Vittore Pisano. Photogravure	126
VIRGIN AND CHILD, ST. JOHN, AND ANGEL, by Botticelli. Photogravure	140
JESUS AND THE DOCTORS, by Rembrandt. Héliogravure	150
AN EPISCOPAL PROCESSION, by Daniel Vierge. Héliogravure	158

TO FACE PAGE

ABEL DEAD, by Camille Bellanger. Héliogravure 166

THE EDUCATION OF GIL BLAS, by Daniel Vierge. Héliogravure . . 174

CARDINAL DE RICHELIEU, by Philippe de Champaigne; etched by C. O. Murray 180

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN, Venetian School; etched by G. W. Rhead 216

PORTRAIT OF QUEVEDO, by Murillo; etched by H. Manesse . . . 224

TENNYSON, Portrait by G. F. Watts, R.A.; Mezzotint by F. Short . . 230

FAMILY PORTRAITS, by Borgognone. Photogravure 232

THE BLESSED DOMINICANS, by Fra Giovanni Angelico. Photogravure . 234

AN OLD MAN, by Rembrandt. Héliogravure 240

LORD LAWRENCE, by G. F. Watts, R.A.; engraved by Norman Hirst . 252

THESEUS, Greek Marble, drawn by G. de Roton 260

A MONK WRITING, ascribed to Luca della Robbia; drawn by T. E. Macklin 262

THOMAS COMBE, Marble Bust, by T. Woolner, R.A.; drawn by G. de Roton 274

THE ARCHBISHOP OF MAINTZ, by Albert Dürer. Héliogravure . . 276

A MEDITATION AT MOONRISE, Japanese Woodcut 280

THE GLEANERS, by J. F. Millet; etched by B. Damman 290

THE BACKGAMMON PLAYERS, by David Teniers; etched by C. O. Murray 298

HEAD OF AN OLD WOMAN, by Frank Dicksee, A.R.A. Photogravure . 300

THE MILKWOMAN, by Lucas of Leyden. Héliogravure 308

COSSACKS, by Caran d'Ache. Héliogravure 326

THE CRADLE, by Nicholas Maes; etched by C. O. Murray 330

BEDTIME, by G. D. Leslie, R.A. Photogravure 336

A DEAD LADY, by N. F. O. Tassaert. Héliogravure 338

MAN IN ART

PART I

CULTURE

HEAD OF A DEITY OR KING

EGYPTIAN

HYALOGRAPH DRAWN BY F. WALENN

(*British Museum*)

THIS work is said by Egyptologists to belong to the twenty-fifth or twenty-sixth dynasty. According to Mariette and Lepsius, who differ to some extent in their Egyptian chronology, this would place the work somewhere in the century between 715 and 685 B.C.

I selected it as a remarkably fine example of Egyptian work, and also for its absolutely and severely conventional treatment of the beard. Compare, for example, this beard with that of Combe in the bust by Woolner. The Egyptian artist was in his own way as right as the Englishman in his, though he made no attempt to imitate hair, but gave only a simplified mass.

There is so much vitality in the expression of the face that it makes us forget the great size and height of the mitre. The work is in perfect preservation. It remains exactly what it was at the beginning of the twenty-four centuries of its existence.

Mr. Walenn's drawing is a very favourable example of the qualities attainable in a hyalograph.

IMP. CHARDON, WITTMANN, PARIS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE representation of human beings in the fine arts affords matter for infinite critical disquisition, and has indeed already been so extensively written upon that a large library might be formed of works in different languages almost exclusively relating to this subject. The present addition to their number is intended as a companion to my work on "Landscape," and its special utility, so far as utility is sought after in writings upon art, will be to present a synthetic view of a subject concerning which our ideas are usually scattered from its very immensity. It may be objected that this immensity would have deterred a prudent writer from attempting to deal with it in one volume when a single department, such, for example, as *Portrait*, would alone have supplied an ample choice of material both for the illustrations and the text. I can only answer that this is not the first time, nor is it likely to be the last, when an attempt is made to take in comparatively few pages a comprehensive survey of materials sufficient for many volumes. It is done continually by writers on the natural sciences, and I have myself already done it in my works on "Landscape" and "The Graphic Arts," each of which might easily have been expanded to several times its bulk. When, however, a writer goes too much into detail, it is difficult for him either to keep the attention of the reader or his own breadth of view; and for my part I prefer that method of literary treatment which follows out a few leading ideas, and illustrates them by reference to those examples only which are the most interesting, and especially the most significant.

It is my belief that whenever *art itself*, as distinguished from science, is in question, there can be little positive doctrine. It will be found, on examination, that all indisputable matters supposed to be in the domain of

art are in reality scientific, and that art itself always refuses to be rigidly bound by scientific laws when there is, or appears to be, some artistic reason for emancipating the artist from their yoke. Much of modern criticism, which appeals to science against art, is therefore otiose, and, for myself, I have now for some time past come frankly to the conclusion that the search for a positive standard of criticism is vain. This might afford a triumph to the more narrow-minded artists (who seldom hesitate to express contempt for all study of art that is theoretical and disinterested), were it not that it affects all opinion equally, so that artists themselves escape no more than we do from the inconveniences and contradictions that the absence of a positive standard entails. The truth is that so soon as any one, whether he be artist, or amateur, or purely theoretical philosopher, attempts to lay down anything about the fine arts he is sure to find, before long, that the subtle spirit of art itself escapes from the meshes of his net. We cannot catch this Proteus. We cannot say, "here and not elsewhere, is his dwelling." We can only say "he is, or has been here," without prejudice as to any appearance of him in other regions of production.

It is an effect of this subtlety and unseizableness in the spirit of art that the idiosyncrasy of the critic himself has always a certain importance. Whether it is a consequence of my northern blood, or of my literary and Christian education, the fact is that I have a strong bias in favour of the mind of Man in comparison with his body, so that I have never been able to look upon the representation of naked muscles as essentially higher art than the expression of intelligence or feeling in the face. On comparing Man with other animals, what strikes me most forcibly as his point of superiority is his remarkable power of association, and of using both the inventions and the knowledge which have been bequeathed to him by former generations of his own species. In a naked statue we see nothing of this, and consequently, however ably the muscles may be imitated and the bones indicated, it seems to me that Man himself is not generically represented here, but only the body of some well-made or idealised individual. The nude appears to me an excellent subject for study, but quite inadequate as a representation of Man, who is not truly himself, in his sovereignty over the earth, until he is clothed with the tissues that he has woven and armed with the tools or weapons that he has invented. I would even go so far as to say that Man in a desert, though clothed and armed as Arabs are when crossing some dreadful *nefood*, is still not Man in his perfect strength. He is most himself—not as an individual but as a representative of his race—when his associated forces are occupied in industry or war, and seen together with the accumulated results of his previous labours, such as the city, the

fortress, or the fleet. The sense of this has led artists into interminable artistic difficulties, the reason being that art itself, the purely artistic perfection, has nothing to do with the celebration of powers that are alien to art except so far as they can be made subservient to it. When Sir Frederick Leighton undertook to illustrate "The Arts of War" and "The Arts of Peace" in the well-known frescoes at South Kensington, he warily avoided such subjects as modern textile manufactures or the forging of cannon and ship armour, though these are the fullest and most recent developments of peaceful and warlike industry. He took us back to an earlier time, and grouped his figures under a bright Italian sky, thus sacrificing industrial progress, and even the patriotic interest of English nationality, to a purely artistic convenience.

We are aware then of a certain conflict between the artistic and the human interest of life, a conflict that may be observed even in literature, where the accurate repetition of language as it is commonly and inelegantly used by men is incompatible with perfection of style, so that they must either be made to talk as they do not talk in reality, or the page must be disfigured by expressions repugnant to the scholarly sense. Nor can we be entirely sure whether that preference of the mind to the body, which I have just confessed in my own case, is not also anti-artistic in another way, as tending towards the philosophical rather than the plastic and graphic appreciation of things. In these ways it may come to pass that not only the assertion of human sovereignty over the earth by the practical arts, but even an increased intellectual interest in our fellow-creatures and a more lively sympathy with them may lead us from "Man in Art" to Man as he is in reality.

CHAPTER II

THE EDUCATION OF THE FIGURE-PAINTER—LITERARY

A VERY eminent painter, who is represented by engravings in this volume, told me that he was strongly in favour of a good general education for painters quite independently of their technical training. This is one side of the question. Another side may be represented by a distinguished painter who had taken a degree at Oxford, and who told me that he deeply regretted the time spent there as entirely lost to his art. A third said that the principle of success was to choose your object and sacrifice, without hesitation, everything to that. He himself had attained reputation by an adherence to this rule, and knew little outside of the studio and the picture-gallery. Another case which appears to confirm the last is that of a student who began by receiving an exceptionally good general education, but who afterwards, though not sorry to be himself intellectually educated, found himself eight or ten years behind his contemporaries, who had worked seriously at drawing when they were children, and at painting when they were boys.

Each of us is sure to start with a prejudice on a subject of this kind. My own innate prejudice has always been strongly in favour of a good general education, and the origin of it is my respect for painting, and my wish to look upon it, if possible, as a liberal profession. What is the distinguishing quality that makes a pursuit liberal? Littré tells us that the liberal arts, as opposed to the mechanic, are those which exact a great and perpetual intervention of the intelligence, and that the origin of this denomination is in the antique prejudice against manual labour, considered unworthy of a freeman because it was given over to slaves. On applying this test to pictures, we find that some of them have, no doubt, required "a great and perpetual intervention of the intelligence," whilst others exhibit much manual labour, reaching the point of extreme manual dexterity, but without any more than the degree of intelligence which, in every

common trade, must be present to direct the hand to the accomplishment of its appointed task. As painting is actually practised it is, if we apply this test, sometimes a liberal, and more frequently not a liberal, profession. Those who, with the present writer, wish to see it maintaining a high rank and exercising an ennobling influence, are anxious to see the liberal side of it insisted upon; those who look to immediate practical results, in the shape of canvas covered rapidly in a workmanlike manner, seek for the shortest road to these results, and desire the fewest possible encumbrances when travelling upon that road.

Now, with regard to the liberal character of the fine arts, Mr. Parker, as an Oxonian somewhat hostile to the pretensions of painting, speaks of liberal arts in the university sense of the term, and goes on to observe:—

"This term is not the exact equivalent of the *ingenuæ artes*. The latter were any pursuits which one of free birth might take up. The liberal arts are more strictly defined. They are not simply the non-servile pursuits, but are studies which need no technical or manual instruction, being of a purely intellectual kind. Hence was formed the idea of a university, which Newman has described as a centre of intellectual activity. It does not appear that these seven arts which are now known as the seven university arts were, when the Faculty of Arts was established, rigorously necessary. They were a type, and as occasion required one might be omitted or others added; but they gave the Faculty of Arts its character, and by means of it decided the general character of the universities of Europe. At the present day a complication has resulted. There is on the one hand a desire, almost universal, to support the view that the fine arts can be taught, as the liberal arts are taught, theoretically. On the other, the University of Oxford has for the first time in its history, with one doubtful exception, departed from the traditional ideal and included practical instruction."

If painting is considered from this point of view, the result will be nearly the same as before, for the truth is that many things about painting may be explained theoretically, but not all. It would be possible in most cases to explain pictorial composition theoretically, and a good deal might be said theoretically about the interpretation of character and passion. Theory may even enter upon the technical domain itself, and show the broadest and most essential differences between methods of drawing and the reasons for employing them; but theory could never explain the difference between good colour and bad, except by the use of such vague expressions as "charm" and "harmony," which are destitute of any exact meaning so long as the qualities which charm and the concordances

which harmonise remain in their essence inexplicable. The result, then, of applying Mr. Parker's test (that a liberal art is an art that can be theoretically taught) would be the not very novel discovery that painting is of a mixed nature. It is partly a liberal and partly a manual art. It is a handicraft always mixed up with a good deal of science, and in some cases with a powerful and affecting element of poetry. The nature of it may be partly imagined by supposing that some great poet was obliged to write out his verses in exquisitely beautiful manuscript, and that the beauty of the caligraphy would be considered first, and the poetry get no praise unless the caligraphy were excellent. This comparison is, however, accurate only up to a certain point, as it gives no equivalent for the important scientific element in painting.

It is, I fear, much easier to maintain the handicraft theory of artistic education than the intellectual. The clever craftsman who sells his pictures, whilst remaining outside of intellectual interests, is called an artist; the man of far wider culture, but whose technical skill remains just below what is marketable, is called an amateur, and these days of intense competition are not favourable to incomplete talents in anything. Whatever is offered for sale in our time must have at least the appearance of thorough workmanship. The handicraft theory of education is founded upon this fact. Its argument may be stated as follows:—"Any teaching you bestow upon youth is an evil if it occupies time that might be devoted to the acquisition of technical skill. It is that, and that alone, which distinguishes the painter from the amateur. What you call education in the university sense of the term is useful to literary men, but an encumbrance to artists, who can always procure without waste of time any information they may need." In his work on the School of David, the French classical painter, M. Delécluze, describes a low class of artists called in French *praticiens*—the journeymen of painting, who learned their craft in the School of David, and being incapable of giving it any intellectual direction, produced works executed with considerable manual skill, but utterly destitute of interest. M. Delécluze tells us that their way of studying composition was to make many hasty sketches after the antique, or from prints by great masters; and then, in the absence of ideas, they would take up Homer or the Greek tragedians (in translation, of course), or more frequently a mythological dictionary, to get by chance some subject for which they made up a composition out of recollections or imitations. They had also, it appears, the habit of laughing at the old gods and goddesses whom they vainly attempted to represent—a silly habit due to ignorance of the profoundly interesting mental processes which led

to the unconscious formation of the antique religions. This habit of ridicule did not make their pictures comic, but it made them dull and dry from the total absence of imaginative sympathy.

Here we have handicraft without mental elevation, and we see what comes of it. To this, however, it might be answered that artists of much distinction have been uneducated, such as Perugino and Claude. Perugino was one of the least lettered men of his age, and so, in a later time, was Claude. Not only were they ignorant of literature, but even incapable of expressing themselves in writing with common perspicuity, and their knowledge of orthography was below the average of their time. Claude, being a landscape painter, does not concern us; it is possible that landscape painters, as they live more outside of human interests, may feel less than painters of the figure the need of humanising studies; they, perhaps, may dispense with the "humanities." But when we come to a painter like Perugino is there not plain evidence of some narrowness in his practice that a more liberal education might have enlarged? Surely we must admit that there is. If you take the work of Perugino as a whole, it is the work of a practised painter and an uneducated man. It is difficult to share in the belief about Raphael's learning into which M. Müntz has been led by his admiration of that great master. M. Müntz finds evidence of something like scholarship in Raphael, and this appears excessive. There is, indeed, little evidence that the great Italian masters were what in the present day we should call educated men. They were usually apprenticed to art in early boyhood, sometimes when mere children, and they worked hard in the master's workshop at such tasks as grinding colours and preparing grounds, or in the more profitable employment of painting easy parts of the master's work. Perugino was apprenticed at the age of nine, Andrea del Sarto (to a goldsmith) at seven, Fra Bartolommeo at ten, Michael Angelo at fourteen, Raphael (according to the most recent evidence) about sixteen, but Raphael learned drawing under his father at an earlier age. The only evidence that M. Müntz is able to bring forward in favour of the early education of Raphael is that his father was fond of reading and able to write verses. This implies a probability that the father would give his son the rudiments of a literary education, and try perhaps to inculcate the love of letters, but it cannot be accepted as evidence that the boy attained any degree of scholarship. On the contrary, we have some proof that at a late period in his short life he was unable to read Latin. Fabio Calvo, of Ravenna, translated Vitruvius at the request of Raphael, and for his use as a student of architecture. This does not prove that the artist was wholly ignorant of Latin, but it certainly shows that he could not read it easily. He was probably like English

schoolboys of the present day who leave school early, but with the difference against him that he had spent time over the rudiments of practical art.

Raphael, however, had the less need of learning in his own person that he was in constant communication of the most friendly kind with distinguished ecclesiastics and scholars, who would always be happy to place at his disposal the results of their own investigations; and as Raphael was very intelligent and open-minded, and a man of the world, he would seize with promptitude upon all the information that he wanted. His mind was not likely either to let slip what was essential or to burden itself uselessly. He was neither neglectful nor pedantic, and being admirably situated in an incomparable centre of intelligence he did not require much personal study except of matters closely appertaining to his art. He was saved from a too narrow speciality by his interest in architecture and archæology, a living interest constantly kept awake by the great architectural works of the period and by the archæological discoveries and discussions incessantly going on around him. His criticism of Gothic architecture, though (of course, with his training) absolutely unsympathetic, is keenly intelligent, and hits upon some of the undeniable faults of Gothic.

Lionardo da Vinci does not appear to have had much literary training, but the versatility of his mental nature effectually preserved him from being a narrow specialist in painting. In his case variety was gained by mathematical and mechanical studies or amusements rather than by literature. His treatise on painting is more a scientific than a literary work, it concerns rather the science of natural appearances than the essentially artistic element in the fine arts. It is generally clear in exposition and does not waste words; it is also original in observation, but it gives no evidence of scholarship. The author's well-known sonnet on the wisdom of restraining our desires within the limits of our powers, and of desiring only those things that are at the same time possible and right, is well turned in expression and elevated in thought.

The variety that Lionardo gained through his mechanical pursuits was ensured to Rubens by two different but most harmonious elements of his genius. He was at the same time a linguist and a man of the world, delighting in the use of different languages, and delighting also in meeting with able and distinguished people in every country where they were to be found. A most cosmopolitan nature, not Flemish but European, or rather European including Flemish as the greater includes the less. This cosmopolitanism in Rubens is marked especially by the extreme naturalness and ease of his correspondence in foreign languages. His French and Italian letters *coulent de source* without any effort of composition; they are not

written with the assistance of the dictionary. He could write Latin, too, as people wrote it for ordinary purposes in his time, and he could understand Latin of finer quality when read to him, as he painted, from the pages of Cicero, Livy, or Seneca. Here would be a certain proof that a literary education need not interfere with the development of a painter, were it not evident that Rubens belonged to a peculiar class, that of the born linguists who assimilate languages with a minimum of effort. In our own country and time Sir Frederick Leighton is a conspicuous example of the same gift. To him the four leading languages of Europe are like four windows looking out upon different prospects, but all equally accessible to the master of the house. In neither of these cases has the knowledge of languages interfered with artistic production, nor is there any reason to suppose that if these two artists had been ignorant men they would either have produced more or painted better. The production of Rubens, as we all know, is a wonderful evidence of energy. That of Leighton is an equal evidence of sustained care and application, of a constant search for the beautiful. We have another famous artist amongst us, whose career would have been made impossible from the beginning by ignorance of the past. Without his archæology, Tadema would have been excluded from the ancient life that has been to him the richest of mines, and without modern languages his own life would have been confined to the limited area of Holland. Instead of being what he is, an artist of European fame, interesting to all who care about antiquity, he might have attained a purely technical reputation as a skilful painter of objects in bronze or marble. And in his case, as in that of Rubens and Raphael, the knowledge of things that may seem to lie outside of the fine arts has not prevented the utmost diligence in the practice of painting itself. Unspoiled by success, Alma Tadema works still in the spirit of a student, always simply endeavouring to do his best.

The truth appears to be, with reference to studies outside of those which are strictly professional, that some painters are endowed with a secondary gift of Nature that makes another study easy to them and attractive, so that without losing their hold on painting they may attain the secondary object, as it were, by merely holding out the hand. In the case of Lionardo it may be suspected that painting itself was the secondary object; his nature was first scientific, and secondly artistic, he being now more famous in art simply because art was more advanced in his time than science, and a genius who was in the front rank of both would seem greater to posterity in art. So in our own time it may be suspected, and for my part I am fully convinced, that the pictorial gift in Rossetti was inferior in natural strength to the poetic, though it was more sedulously, because more professionally,

cultivated. In Mr. Woolner the literary gift is subordinate to the plastic. He is strong and masculine as a sculptor, and has a poetical gift which, though genuine, is neither so strong nor cultivated to the same degree. Samuel Palmer had a decided and original literary faculty, which included what is best in criticism, the power of appreciating great authors. He had not the faculty of a linguist, which shows itself in the rapid assimilation of modern languages, but his power of sympathy with another tongue is proved by his intense enjoyment of Latin poetry.

The two most famous French artists of the present century had each a secondary talent. In the case of Ingres it was music. His father had taught him to draw and play the violin from infancy, these two studies being almost the whole of his education, and it was for some years uncertain whether painting or music was to be the chief pursuit of his life. At the age of thirteen he successfully performed a concerto by Viotti in the theatre at Toulouse, and about the same time he entered the studio of an artist established there. At sixteen he became a pupil of David, nor did he change his occupations in after life, for music still remained his secondary pursuit. His mind was narrow, not being enlarged by literature, and his character lacked the amenity that might perhaps have come from a more scholarly cultivation. Eugène Delacroix, on the contrary, has a reputation for general culture, probably because it was rare amongst the artists of his time. He passed through the usual classical French curriculum, though incompletely; however, this implies a training in Latin and French. Charles Blanc said he had "a tincture of Latin, sufficient for him to live with the learned," and in mature life he tried to learn English, and wrote a few letters in our language, not comparable to the idiomatic French and Italian of Rubens. He even became a contributor to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, but he said, "The pen is not my tool; I feel that I think accurately, but I am frightened at the necessity for literary method. Would you believe that the mere having to write a page gives me a headache?" This is not the feeling of a born writer, even when composition is difficult for him. However, if Delacroix had the "dread of the pen," which is not uncommon amongst painters, he was fond of reading in early manhood. In mature life he felt inclined to throw all books aside as repertories of commonplaces. "What they have to say about love and friendship is nothing better than a play upon half a dozen ideas that were current a thousand years ago. There is not one of them that has ever painted the disenchantment, or rather the despair, of maturity and old age. You have never seen in books what you feel about that, stated as you feel it. You get nothing but rhetoric and phrases." This is the criticism of a man soured by infirm health and the

approach of old age or death, which is the alternative we all have before us when middle-age draws to its close, but it is not the criticism of an unthinking or an ignorant person. He has tried literature, and found it wanting. Others, in the same circumstances (Mark Pattison, for instance), have found it dearer in the darkening of life.[1]

It is needless to accumulate examples, though it would be easy to adduce others. My own inference from these and all other cases known to me is as follows. It is clear, in the first place, that culture, outside of what is purely technical, is not absolutely necessary to a painter of physical man; that is to say, that the human body may be effectively painted by a trained art-student who has learned the anatomy of bones and muscles, but when we come to painting the mind, or so much of it as can be represented on canvas, the problem becomes more complicated, and may call for a less simple preparation. However, even with regard to mind, it does not appear that a literary education would be necessary in all cases. For example, a painter of ignorant peasants would need to understand the minds of persons of that class in order to represent them dramatically; but he would attain this better by watching them in their daily life, that is, by observing Nature for mind as well as for body, rather than by reading books, even though the books described the class he had to paint. It does not appear either that the sort of intelligence which learning may communicate or sharpen can help us much to understand ignorant persons. Scott regretted that he was not what is called a scholar, Burns despised scholarship in comparison with genius observing nature; neither of the two would have described Scottish peasants better for having overcome the difficulties of Greek. The learning of Rubens would have been useless to Teniers when painting the interior of a Dutch ale-house. When, however, the painter chooses his subjects from a higher class of society, the need for some degree of literary culture becomes more apparent. In the case of the elder Leslie there can be no doubt that it was his love of the best English authors which sharpened his intelligence, and gave that keenness of perception and refinement of humorous observation which make his works so much superior to ordinary pictures of genteel comedy. The value of the kind of reading, which for Leslie was a constant study through life, may be illustrated by a comparison with another art. The observation of nature is, no doubt, necessary to the actor, but the studies that lead an actor to eminence are, in great part,

[1] Delacroix objected strongly to the habit of copying Nature, and compared Nature to a dictionary which was to be often referred to and never copied. The illustration was excellent, and the reader will notice that it was purely literary, and very accurate from the literary as well as from the artistic point of view.

literary studies, and the power of observing nature itself is strengthened and stimulated by the attention first given to literature. If literary studies are to be profitable, they ought not to be too remote from the kind of subject that the artist usually paints. I remember a young landscape-painter who was advised to read Latin and Greek authors in order to improve his mind. Here the connection is not distinctly visible, as the descriptions of landscape in classic authors are both brief and rare; but if the young artist had devoted himself to the illustration of classical figure subjects, then he would have gained by literary studies, which bring one nearer to the thought and culture of the ancients.

Finally, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that there is something fundamentally unsatisfactory in the whole of this question about the literary education of painters, because the technical merits of a picture are its most necessary merits, and intellectual attainment in the artist himself is never accepted as a substitute for them. Therefore the temptation to throw aside intellectual labour as useless is almost irresistible, and it rarely happens that any persevering attempt is made to resist it. The general education given in public schools and universities is felt to be an advance in the direction of what Mr. Parker would admit to be liberal professions—that is, professions which can be taught theoretically—but the technical difficulty of painting places it in another category. The system of university training prepares the mind, so that it may afterwards be easily directed either to theology, law, politics, or literature, and even to several of these pursuits in turn; it would only prepare for the history and theory of art, or, in other words, partly educate the student for the functions of a Slade Professor. We know how easily the educated man changes from one department of activity to another, as politicians successively occupy different ministries; whereas if a workman has engaged himself for years in any manual speciality, it is most difficult for him to get out of it, so that we too often find him absolutely starving at an unprofitable trade, yet unable to turn to anything else. When a handicraft has once taken full possession of a man, he is bound to it for the rest of his days. Well for him if he can remain in it contentedly, as the bee goes on with its industry; woe to him if he strives to get out of it, like that skilful painter Botticelli, who, "without a grain of learning, scarcely knowing how to read, undertook to make a commentary on Dante."

Our advocacy of a better literary training for painters of the figure is not intended to make them learned commentators on the great poets. We know that it must be subordinate to the necessity for technical training, and it cannot include any heavy intellectual labour, such as the study of ancient Greek. Still we maintain the necessity for some intellectual education, if

the fine arts are to be more than the manual trade which is contained in them. And there is an especial reason for advocating something like mental culture at the present time, when the tendencies of the modern schools exhibit a discouraging indifference to it.

One is not absolutely alone in an advocacy of this kind. From time to time some leading intelligence in the artistic world itself is painfully struck by the anomalous state of education amongst artists. M. Guillaume, who was at one time director of the *École des Beaux Arts*, saw much of the artistic fraternity both in the preparatory and the more advanced stages of the profession, and it seemed to him a lamentable contradiction that men who ought to be amongst the *élite* of the cultivated world were so often below the most ordinary average of the educated middle class. "The immense void," wrote M. Guillaume, "the irremediable hiatus left in the talents of young artists by the total absence, I will not say of culture, but of notions about literature, is a fact that touches me more and more." A professorship of literature was afterwards established in the school, the business of the professor being to read aloud, with vigorous elocution, and to comment upon the most stirring works of the greatest authors, of course in French translations. It is said that the young men take pleasure in these readings, which do really often awaken an interest in literature and give them a sort of acquaintance with great masterpieces. The dramatic imagination that often accompanies the painter's instinct is roused into activity, and the pupil acquires in some measure the literary sense. He is no longer in absolute ignorance, like the utterly illiterate. Unfortunately, however, the struggle amongst artists in the present day, the struggle for fame and employment, for existence even, is now more than ever technical, more than ever it is fought out on the ground of handicraft rather than on that of intellect, sentiment, or taste.

Towards the close of the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1889 a number of prizes were bestowed for excellence in art, and the awards were the more interesting that the jury was professional. We were thus enabled to detect the dominant professional preferences, which were quite unintentionally revealed to us. The intellectual qualities of art appeared to count for nothing, the most empty and thoughtless work having quite as good a chance of a prize as the most nobly imagined—I mean in the way of subject and conception. Refinement, too, seemed to count for nothing whatever, being often either entirely overlooked or insignificantly rewarded, whilst open vulgarity was not an impediment to success. When, however, rewards are given by competent judges, there must be a valid reason for giving them, and it may be independent of unprofessional objections.

We may dislike coarseness and vulgarity, professional judges may pass over these defects, or be insensible to them, and seek for positive qualities of a technical kind that have nothing to do with intellect or taste. In Paris that which attracted notice and reward appeared to be almost uniformly executive skill, or not skill only but *power*, the power of the bold and masterly hand. The reader knows what this means on the Continent; it means dashing brush-work, on a large scale, with plenty of material paint. Some of the most favoured pictures were vulgar in this sense, that they could never have been painted by any one of delicate perceptions and a cultivated mind, but the manual power displayed in them was always accompanied by professional knowledge, the kind of knowledge that is to be gained by working for several years in a French *atelier*. I remember greatly admiring a very refined picture, faultless in taste, modest but harmonious in colour, and full of pensive sentiment. It was the picture most liable to be overlooked; however, it did obtain the doubtful honour of a third-class medal. Not very far from it a study of three oxen, with a herdsman, all boldly brushed as large as life, and staring and glaring in a coarse imitation of full sunshine, was ticketed *Grand Prix*.

CHAPTER III

THE EDUCATION OF THE FIGURE-PAINTER—SCIENTIFIC

DANTE ROSSETTI once said to me in his own studio, "The antithesis of art is science." Poetry and painting seemed to him the product of one state of mind, and science the accumulation of facts and truth ascertained in another and an opposite state of mind. Nevertheless on another occasion, when speaking to Mr. Hall Caine, he compared his own system of painting to a science. "Now I paint by a set of unwritten but clearly-defined rules, which I could teach to any man as systematically as you could teach arithmetic." In the same conversation he compared the craft of painting to a mechanical trade. "In painting, after all, there is in the less important details something of the craft of a superior carpenter, and the part of a picture that is not mechanical is often trivial enough." Here we find the poet-painter maintaining that an art usually assumed to be unteachable is as teachable as arithmetic, and that an art usually regarded as far above all mechanical occupations is comparable to carpentry. He said that, beyond the fundamental conception of a picture, there was "not much" that could not be done by rule. He laughed at the idea of making a picture in a "fine frenzy" of inspiration, and seemed to agree with Thackeray in the opinion that after the first jet of invention the art of painting was the application of workmanlike method.

Mr. John Collier, in his excellent opusculum *A Primer of Art*, frankly accepts science as a help to art. "There are some people," he says, "who affect a great horror at the idea of science intruding upon the domain of art. This feeling is, however, dying out now that science is becoming better understood. After all, science merely means knowledge. To say that one has a scientific acquaintance with a subject means that one has an accurate knowledge of it, neither more nor less; and it is difficult to maintain at the present day that a man who follows any pursuit is likely to do it the worse the more he knows about it.'

There are the two sides of the question, the only inequality being that it has been stated more powerfully and more completely in favour of science. Let me, then, attempt a fuller exposition of Rossetti's apothegm. What did he mean at the moment by saying that art and science were antithetic ?

The expression "scientific knowledge" might be criticised as tautological; it is like saying "knowing knowledge," and yet in consequence of a peculiar sense that the word "scientific" has acquired we cease to be aware of the tautology, and, indeed, for this reason the tautology does not exist for us. Mr. Collier's affirmation that science is only knowledge comes, on the other hand, with a little shock of surprise. We ask ourselves if the knowledge that is called "science" is not, in some way, different from that which is not called "science"; surely there must be a difference since different words are used. Here is an illustration. I happened to say to Matthew Arnold about culture (which was a favourite subject of his) that in my humble opinion the culture of the intelligence could not be complete unless it included literature, art, and science, though not necessarily in equal proportions. What I intended to say was that the cultivated intellect was one capable of following the different processes of thought which are those of the writer, the painter (or sculptor), and the man of science; that he ought to be able to read books that are literature, to follow a scientific argument, and to understand the expression of mind in the graphic and plastic arts. Well, Arnold readily admitted this with regard to literature and art, but demurred when he came to the scientific side. Clearly, then, he perceived a difference between the knowledge that belongs to literature and art and that which belongs to science. There was, no doubt, a time when this distinction was not rigorously established —a time when "knowledge" and "science" were regarded as convertible terms. In the present day what is called a scientific truth is a truth that can be intelligibly stated and verified by an appeal to the fixed order of the universe. A scientific doctrine is a doctrine that affirms something about the natural order; it may be more or less of the nature of an hypothesis, but it invariably asks to be tested by reference to the order which really exists, and if it fails to stand the test it is rejected as not scientific. The scientific elements in literature and art are those which will bear this test, but there are other elements of the utmost importance that will not bear it at all.

If pictures were to be expelled from public galleries for scientific error, there would be a surprising clearance. Impossible lighting is so common in Rembrandt and Turner as to be the rule with them, Titian's favourite

effect combines a landscape in late twilight with figures illuminated some time earlier. Raphael had no knowledge of visual effect, but simply drew human beings and architecture as definite objects with clear outlines. On the other hand we find a few artists who are strictly scientific in their work, but they are never so truly artists as those who hold somewhat loosely to natural law. Dürer had no science of effect, but he had a scientific temper in the love of clear definition and in his way of giving an accurate graphic description of every object. On this point I may take the opportunity for offering an apology to Dürer. There is a plane in the foreground of the "Melencolia," and I ventured to say in one of my books that the cutter was inclined the wrong way if we judged from the position of an upright handle which I believed to be situated at the stern end of the tool. An American reviewer corrected me by saying that Dürer's plane is still in use in some parts of Germany, and that he represented it with perfect accuracy. Of course he did, I might have been sure of that! Another American reviewer said that Dürer made out construction so carefully that his plates might serve to-day as working drawings for a cabinet-maker. As to this possibility a correspondent informed me that a table actually had been made from the clearly engraved design in the plate of Dürer's "St. Jerome." Dürer's work is scientific in the extreme precision of its information about things (see the construction of the compasses and scales in the "Melencolia"), and the manual workmanship is so clear and accurate that it has never been equalled in its own way. The desire to take a tangible object and describe it with the most perfect definition is a scientific and not an artistic desire. Dürer was a peculiar combination of a first-rate mechanic, taking a great interest in all sorts of tools and all varieties of construction, with a religious moralist, in mind not very unlike a pious Scotch locksmith of the present day, who has a lively interest in scientific lectures. But Dürer was not by instinct, and he never became by culture, an artist in the essential meaning of the term. He had no notion of the artistic effect, favourable or detrimental, that one object has on another that is seen near it. The "Melencolia" is spoiled, for the eye, by the heavy angular stone that is put awkwardly to signify the inertia of things when human labour is suspended. Dürer did not understand either sacrifice or composition. Mystery and suggestion lay quite outside of his capacity. He had scientific knowledge, that is the knowledge of hard facts that can be definitely stated and tested, but he had not the artistic knowledge of elusive and unseizable truth, nor the artistic sense of relation. Our own age and country have produced several painters who are really men of science expressing their knowledge with the brush. The most perfect

example of these was Mr. Edward Cooke. He began by studying perspective and architecture under Pugin, then he illustrated botanical works and interested himself in naval construction, etching fifty plates of shipping which are still esteemed for their accuracy. He painted a large number of pictures, every one of which contains a scientifically accurate representation of buildings, shipping, or landscape. Geologists who usually despise the confused geology of landscape-painters were satisfied with his. The biography of Cooke in "Men of the Time" closes significantly by telling us that he was a Fellow of the Linnæan, Zoological, Geographical, and Geological Societies. Could there be better evidence of a scientific bent? Cooke's election as an Academician was probably due to his manual skill, for though the absence of the artistic sense is not so obvious in him as it is in Dürer, Cooke was not a born artist like Turner. He was born to excel in science and in handicraft. There is at the present time a French painter of great ability named Loustaunau, who is strikingly scientific in his tendencies, being completely in harmony with military science. It is his pleasure to paint such scenes as the trial of a military balloon, or the work of the engineers when rapidly establishing a military bridge to restore an interrupted railway, and he represents subjects of this kind without the slightest artistic repugnance for the ugly material, the rigid iron beams, and the unpicturesque landscape. He paints quite as truly as Cooke, is as good a workman, whilst, as in the case of the English Academician, all that he does can be brought to the test of scientific criticism. Loustaunau is, in fact, even more scientific than Dürer, for he represents objects as accurately, and in addition to object-drawing has studied light and atmosphere with close attention, whilst his military instincts make him think and observe like an officer of engineers. Such painting as his may be truly described as the antithesis of that romantic art, which endeavours to convey to our minds the poetry of ancient battle as Tennyson has conveyed it in his verse. Modern warfare is an application of science, and here the scientific painter has his place. Knowledge of the same kind might be applied to the accurate delineation of unlovely railway bridges that span our rivers, with the steamboats plying under them. In interiors the same patient observation has already given us absolutely faithful pictures of laboratories and asylums, such as M. Pasteur's laboratory for the cultivation of the virus of rabies and the students watching an hysterical woman under M. Charcot at the *Salpêtrière*.

Literature is so closely connected with painting that we may observe in it the same clear distinction between artistic and scientific knowledge. A

student who reads the *Faerie Queene* gains no scientific information beyond the simple fact that such a work is a part of literature, and he might learn that without reading it, whilst a single canto would give him a sufficient idea of the nature and quality of the performance. When, however, we consider the *Faerie Queene* as a work of literary art, it is like a rich and extensive gallery. The consequence is that as education becomes more scientific there is a steady tendency to substitute the science of literature (that is the bare knowledge that such and such books have been written, with a synopsis of their contents) for the study of literature itself, which requires both more time and a much more sympathetic intelligence. In like manner the world is now substituting the science of religions, that is the knowledge of what has been believed and an investigation into the origins and modifications of beliefs, for religion itself, which is the personal participation in some faith whilst it is still vigorous and alive.

The scientific study of the figure preceded the scientific study of landscape by about three hundred years. Painters of the figure learned anatomy about three hundred years before landscape-painters directed their own attention, for exactly the same kind of help, to botany and geology. Even in the present generation French critics laugh at English landscape-painters because some of them possess a little botanical knowledge; and there are still artists who imagine that botany means poring over minute dissections with a microscope, not seeing that it has anything to teach about dominant laws of growth in such important things as trees. However, in the art which represents the human form the victory of science has been long since assured. There are few critics living, and still fewer artists, who would maintain that a figure-painter can be the better for ignorance of anatomy. The only argument in favour of ignorance is that knowledge is apt to assert itself too emphatically, and to transgress the truth of Nature by insisting on facts of internal structure that Nature partially veils. The painter who studies muscular anatomy may be led to exaggerate muscles and to make them not only too important, but too much separated by definite markings. That this has been frequently done by artists since anatomy was first studied is so evident that it is one of the commonest reasons for the secret dislike that is felt for "Grand art." I confess that I never saw the "St. Symphorien" by Ingres, which is considered his masterpiece, without a feeling of dislike which is chiefly due to the exaggeration of muscle in the foreground figures, and in the engraving this is still more unpleasantly accentuated. An English anatomist, Dr. Knox, describes a race that in his opinion is degenerating, and these, according to him, are some of the proofs and evidences of degeneration. He says "in both sexes the adipose

cellular cushion interposed between the skin and the aponeuroses and muscles disappears, or at least loses its adipose portion; the muscles become stringy and show themselves; the tendons appear on the surface." Nobody can read these words without being struck by their exact concordance with the display of anatomy in art, at least so far as the male body is concerned. Is it not true that in painting and engraving, when the object is to display the artist's anatomical knowledge, he does exactly what nature does when she is ruining one of her own races by the fatal process of degeneration? Does not the artist cause the adipose cellular cushion interposed between the skin and the muscles to disappear? Do not the muscles in his drawing become stringy and show themselves? Are not the tendons made visible on the surface? One would imagine that Dr. Knox, instead of being a critic of living races, was an art-critic describing the work of some master with a reputation for anatomical acquirement.

The desire to make anatomy too visible ought not, however, to be a reproach against scientific education generally, but only against the predominance of a speciality in science. For if the tangible form of a dead and dissected muscle is a fact of science, so is the exact degree of its visibility in the living frame, and the evil that has just been recognised is merely due to the insistence upon one science to the exclusion of another which, for the artist, is even of greater importance. It is as much a scientific truth that a muscle is visible or invisible in the living body under special conditions of movement, as it is that it can be found by dissection in the dead one. Therefore a painting which shows muscles and tendons more than nature shows them in life is not really more scientific than a painting faithful to visual truth, but much less so, and, in fact, the unnatural display of anatomical knowledge is a display of scientific as well as artistic ignorance. If we try to imagine a completely learned painter we shall be led irresistibly to the conclusion that his knowledge would be unobtrusive. It could not be otherwise, because complete knowledge would prevent each special science from obtruding itself at the expense of other sciences equally well known.

Painters, like other people, appreciate the utility of those sciences which they have themselves acquired, and despise as useless those that they have never learned. We have an excellent instance of this in Lionardo da Vinci himself, who, being fully aware from his own experience of the value of anatomy to artists regarded it as the best of safeguards against vulgar errors. "The painter," he said, "who has obtained a perfect knowledge of the tendons and muscles, and of those parts which contain the most of them, will know to a certainty, in giving a particular motion to any part of

HERCULES REPOSING

GRÆCO-ROMAN MARBLE STATUETTE IN THE TOWNLEY COLLECTION

HYALOGRAPH DRAWN BY F. WALENN

(*British Museum*)

GIVEN as an example of a thick and muscular figure that has attained its complete development.

The sculptor has endeavoured to realise the idea of strength without that fatness which the Japanese associate with it. In this figure the joints are clean and not overburdened with flesh, whilst the flesh itself is pure muscle. Still the proportions are not the most perfect even for a Hercules, the chest, for example, is relatively small.

Although we have no means of determining scale, the impression produced by this statuette is that of a short, very robust man. In real life men of this mould are usually short.

It may be observed that although the classic artist intended to display muscular force to the utmost he did not exhibit the anatomy of the muscles so much as was afterwards done by the painters of the Renascence. The arms of this Hercules are not so muscular as certain arms by Raphael, Michael Angelo, and Ingres, in which those artists had no intention of exhibiting extraordinary strength. The antique sculptor kept within the limits of nature.

IMP. CHARDON WITTMANN PARIS

the body, which and how many of the muscles give rise and contribute to it; which of them, by swelling, occasion their shortening, and which of the cartilages they surround. He will not imitate those who, in all the different attitudes they adopt, or invent, make use of the same muscles in the arms, back, or chest, or any other parts." This is the language of practical common sense, giving reasons for preferring knowledge to ignorance, yet the same artist and philosopher approved Botticelli's foolish and ignorant remark about landscape, that it is but a vain study, "since, by throwing a sponge impregnated with various colours against a wall, it leaves some spots upon it, which may appear like a landscape." Perhaps, if Lionardo had applied the same principles of study to the component parts of landscape that he did to bones and muscles, he might have painted something at the same time more beautiful and more truthful than the pasteboard rocks behind "La Vierge aux Rochers," or the feeble mountainous distance that spoils the perfection of his Mona Lisa.

There is but one real danger in the scientific studies of artists, and it ought never to be lost sight of by professors, whether they hold chairs of fine art in the universities or lecture within the walls of the Royal Academy itself. The danger lies in cultivating and encouraging a scientific spirit to such a degree that the artistic spirit may become inactive. This is a figurative expression, but it is convenient and intelligible. A man has but one mind; his brain is not inhabited by five or six intelligences, yet he may employ different faculties at different times, and may develop some of them at the expense of others, and so we speak of his working in this or that spirit as if he contained several different persons within himself. The natural gift of poetry is compatible with very prosaic gifts, such as those of order and economy, and with very prosaic studies, such as grammar; and when the poet exercises his prosaic gifts he must for the time be acting in a prosaic spirit, but his power as an artist in verse consists in being able to lull that prosaic spirit into complete inactivity for the time, and to awaken another spirit into energy. The complete poet is one who can disembarrass himself at will of prosaic ideas and expressions, and live, whilst at work, in a region where all thought and all language are poetical. The reader is sure to be familiar with an expression very frequently used by religious people; they insist upon the necessity for a religious spirit, or what they often call "a prayerful spirit," and they tell us, if we write scientifically, that we do not understand religion, that our minds have not access to religious truth. No doubt they are right in this, that the scientific spirit is as remote from the spirit of the saint as it is from that of the artist, and it is conceivable that the constant

habit of scientific thinking might so bind down the mind to what can be measured or tested that it might become almost incapable of realising in itself an order of what are called "spiritual truths," which must be, by their nature, beyond the reach of science. There is, I believe, a remarkably close analogy between the religious and the artistic spirits, even though they may be unintelligible to each other. Both are gifts, instinctive and unprogressive. Men were as religious in ancient Judæa, as artistic in Greece, as in the days of the Puritans, or of the artistic renascence. The religious mind and the artistic are both compelled to take some account of science, but they do so unwillingly, and are not really at home in it. I am not speaking of those theologians and artists who have a natural scientific bent: in their case the divergence to science is a relaxation. A clergyman may have a turn for calculation like Colenso, but algebra is not religion. An artist may be a linguist like Rubens, or an engineer like Lionardo, but when he produces he must live wholly in the artistic spirit, or the produce will not be fine art. The dislike felt by many artists, especially landscape-painters, to science, the feeling of irksomeness with which many students apply their minds for a short time to perspective and anatomy, the much closer sympathy that painters usually have for music and poetry than for scientific pursuits, may all be accounted for by an instinctive apprehension that a predominant scientific spirit might enfeeble the artistic, and so far paralyse it as to make production itself no longer artistic but mechanical. The fear is not groundless, especially in an age like ours, when all kinds of positive, measurable knowledge are more than ever valued, and when a spirit so delicate, so dreamy, and so peculiar as that of fine art, seems by contrast a mood of idleness. The ideally perfect artist would be a dreamer without any conscious formulising of knowledge in his mind, but with a memory so vast and sure that he could call to his mind's eye at any time, and instantaneously, as much of natural truth as happened to be needed for his work. A being so perfectly constituted for art would not be under any necessity for working from nature, he would observe as a poet observes, and his product would be a natural birth rather than an artificial construction by a Frankenstein. We have not, however, as yet, known any instance of the artistic faculty in such a condition of ideal purity and vigour. In almost all known instances it has needed succour from faculties outside of itself. The appeal to the help of science is a confession of imperfect ocular observation, and of weakness in the ocular memory. Science is to the artist what spectacles are to the dim-sighted, and note-books to the forgetful.

CHAPTER IV

THE EDUCATION OF THE FIGURE-PAINTER—TECHNICAL

IF it were true, as we are sometimes told, that painting can be learned but cannot be taught, we might perhaps be permitted to ask what is the use of French *ateliers* and English schools of art?

The truth is that there are teachable and unteachable elements in painting as there are in literature. The subject may perhaps be best understood by considering briefly, in the first place, the education of a writer of books.

Authors have never been taught to write books, they have never been apprenticed to the trade. Matthew Arnold did not go to study poetical composition under Tennyson or criticism under Sainte-Beuve. Still we cannot say that Matthew Arnold was either an untaught or a self-taught author. His father was the most notable schoolmaster of his time, the schoolmaster who excelled all others in influence over boys and in the art of awakening their minds to a living interest in their work. Matthew Arnold began with the best classical education that could be got in the England of his day, and this education was the better and the more vital in his case that he thoroughly believed in the value of it. Nor did he stop short in his education at the close of his university career. His mind was too open for him to remain satisfied with a single modern language; he studied German, and entered more fully into the spirit of French criticism, and appreciated its quality better, than any other contemporary Englishman. All this did not teach him to write, but it was a preparation, and without such preparation Arnold could never have written as he did. Imagine Arnold with the education of Burns! Look through his pages of exquisitely felicitous prose; look through his poems, too few in number, but so perfect in workmanship, so superior to the false ornaments of a vulgar taste, so disdainful of mere vigour, and then try to take out of them what is due to education, leaving only the native gift! You will find that it is im-

possible! Arnold's education is everywhere in his literary work; it is in every page, although so little showy that, in his poetry at least, it manifests itself chiefly in a classical reticence and simplicity. Now, turn to another poet whose literary education was not so extensive as Arnold's — Dante Rossetti. He had not Arnold's classical training; he never learned Greek, which was a part of Arnold's being. He remained at school till his fifteenth year, and acquired "the elements," says his biographer, "of Latin, French, and German." He continued German for a time after leaving school, but afterwards abandoned and in great part forgot it. Here, then, is a case of literary education defective by its incompleteness, the common literary education of artists and other men in the working middle-class who are obliged to leave school at the age of fourteen or fifteen, the sort of education that Professor Seeley looks upon as *going part of the way towards an education.* Well, if Rossetti had enjoyed no more complete training than that, it is probable that his literary career would have proved abortive, but it so happened that he was prepared for poetry in a quite peculiar and exceptional manner. His father was a celebrated Italian poet, and not only that, but a devoted student and professor of Italian literature. Dante Rossetti, therefore, got in his youth such an introduction to that literature as no Englishman ever enjoyed before, and he profited by it to the full, loving and delighting in the great Italian poets as much as Arnold delighted in the ancient Greeks. Now, it so happens that Italian literature is the only literature of Europe which attained perfection of form at the beginning of the modern time, and therefore Rossetti found in his Italian studies examples of sound literary workmanship comparable to those for which the ordinary student goes back to Roman or Greek antiquity. "If ever," said a distinguished Oxonian to me, "if ever we have to abandon Greek and Latin there will be no substitute so good as the best Italian literature, because it attained literary perfection so early." This was said quite without reference to Rossetti, but observe how exactly it applies to him!

Finally, there was a preparation that Arnold and Rossetti had in common, the study of English literature; and here I think that Rossetti had the advantage, not in extent of critical acquirement, but of more passionate sympathy with the elder English literature, especially on its tragical side. Another preparation common to both poets was that they were taught the English language and bred under scholarly influences.

Now, if the reader will ask himself how literary instances of this kind may be profitable in the study of art, he has only to state the case in more general terms. The special art in these cases was not taught, but it was

prepared for. The students were made familiar with the technical medium (language), and they were led to study the finest examples of noble work under good and experienced guidance. Could as much as this be done for a young painter? Certainly it could. If we go further and ask whether it would be possible to do more for him, the answer is very doubtful.

There are two elements common to poetry and painting, one of which is absolutely incommunicable and the other communicable only when the pupil and master happen to be in the closest possible sympathy, a case which is extremely rare. The first is invention, and the second taste. In all good poetry and in all first-rate painting these two qualities are present; but invention is always fresh and personal, and taste hardly less so when it reaches the degree of distinction, as the word itself implies. It is therefore useless to attempt the teaching of invention, and as for taste, the utmost that can be done is to put the pupil in such a situation that good taste will surround and influence him, which is effected in literature by the choice of books written in good language, and in life by keeping as much as possible in the most civilised society. However, I do not insist in any way upon the teachableness of taste, having known instances where the utmost endeavours were made to inculcate it without the smallest commencement of success.

Let us consider what is really teachable. A pupil can be taught the art of study (I am still speaking with equal reference to literature and painting). He can be taught, what he would not find out for himself till too late for use, the art of applying his powers to the right difficulty at the right time, which includes the art of neglecting for the present what is *négligeable*, as the French say. And now, to come to what specially concerns painting, the pupil can be taught not only the art of studying as he might in literature, but the special craft of making studies and the use of them, and how to test his acquired knowledge by making studies from memory of different kinds for different purposes. He cannot, as I have said, be taught to invent; nevertheless, he can be invited, under the most stimulating conditions of emulation, to test for himself and for his masters whatever powers of invention he may naturally possess.

The present French system of technical education includes, I believe, all that is necessary for the figure-painter, and is the most rational that was ever invented, because it wastes no time upon non-essentials, and apportions wisely the time given to what is more or less essential, neither neglecting anything that ought to be admitted nor allowing it disproportionate attention. As an example of what I mean by disproportionate attention I will not shrink from mentioning the labour which for many years was

bestowed by English students on giving a pretty texture to their drawings by means of stippling. It was not their fault; it was due to a most mistaken encouragement of that kind of finish coming from an artist at that time in a very influential position. This led to what was considered high finish, but was in reality an industrious kind of idleness, in the minor schools which prepared students for the Academy—schools which modify their methods according to Academical demand. The practice seems to have extended all over the country, for Mr. Poynter says that the drawings sent up by Government schools of art to the central competition at South Kensington must have required at least six weeks of "painful stippling with chalk and bread." He adds in a footnote that this understates the case; that he "found students at work on drawings from the antique which had already occupied them a considerable portion of the previous term (five months) and were not half finished." This foolish waste of time was not only unprofitable as art, but it was enough to stupefy any human intelligence. The practice of stippling simply leads to manual skill *in stippling itself*; it cannot lead to any improvement in *drawing*, it teaches nothing about nature, and as for art one may learn more of that by the active application of the mind during a few well-occupied hours than by an eternity of manual toil combined with mental inertness. I may now pass to another, though a rarer, misemployment of the student's time, and that is laborious shading with the pen. The modern demand for etchings and pen-drawings may occasionally lead a student to draw from life with a pen in order to give himself the special kind of skill that is useful in book illustration. If he confines himself to rapid and very simple work—such as the pen-sketching of Raphael—the time employed is not likely to be wasted, because that was nothing but a clear and firm setting down of a few selected facts or ideas; but when laborious finish is attempted—like that of much modern etching from pictures—the pen is not a desirable instrument for study. The recognised principle in French art-education is that the quickest means are best, provided, of course, that the object is fully attained. For studies without colour nothing has hitherto been found so convenient or, on the whole, so rapid as chalk or charcoal, with a free employment of the stump. Sir Frederick Leighton, one of the few English artists who trouble themselves to make studies, habitually uses black and white chalk upon brown paper—so habitually that he rarely employs anything else.

In the time of Ingres it was not the custom to teach painting at the *École des Beaux Arts*, but only drawing, and he used to maintain that painting was a secondary and superficial acquirement, ridiculously easy. This was because, as Charles Blanc said of him, Ingres himself always

THE LAUGHING FAUN

GREEK MARBLE

HYALOGRAPH DRAWN BY G. DE ROTON

(*Louvre*)

THIS is not properly a bust, though it looks rather like one. It is part of a statue, and it is said that other fragments of the same statue were found in the same place; that is, at Vienne in Dauphiny.

This work is of peculiar interest on account of its great vivacity of expression, rare in antique sculpture. The laughing face is not a caricature though purposely of an inferior type. The laughter is that of simple joy and gaiety, it is not cynical or devilish.

The only restorations are the right ear and the point of the left.

The statue was found in the year 1820.

IMP. CHARDON-WITTMANN PARIS

subordinated colour to drawing in his own practice. Here is a statement of the case in his own words :—

"The School of Fine Arts, it is true, has not a school of painting properly so called; it teaches nothing but drawing, but drawing is everything—it is the whole of art. The material processes of painting are very easy, and may be learned in a week; by the study of drawing, by lines, are learned the proportion, the character, the knowledge of all the varieties of mankind of all ages—their types, their forms, and the modelling which completes the beauty of the work."[1]

Ingres then referred to the authority of the old masters, who never painted their studies, but always worked from drawings.

Stated in fewer words, the doctrine of Ingres amounts to this: "Learn to draw, and let painting take care of itself." It is distinctly the advice of a draughtsman who despises painting for a supposed facility. He does not in the least perceive the difficulty of colour—not because he is naturally so gifted as to overcome it easily, but because he has never encountered it. There is also the question of texture. An artist professing, like Ingres, the utmost respect for painters who did not study texture or the quality of surfaces, could at any time intrench himself behind their authority when he found it simpler to follow them than to imitate nature.

It has been proved by many examples that it is not impossible to make pictures in colour from drawings in black and white, the colour being afterwards sufficiently supplied from memory or invention. It was the constant practice of Millet to work from uncoloured sketches, many of which, done boldly and simply with the pen, did not even pretend to give the values of local colour in light and dark. I am told that there are living men who, having become skilful in the kind of clever pen-drawing which is now reproduced for illustration, have passed from that to painting with a surprising suddenness and facility. Mr. Fildes, the Academician, having been an excellent draughtsman, became, it is said, a painter all at once. So that there is really something to be said in favour of the theory that would make art-education essentially the education of a draughtsman. On the other hand, when art-education is made to extend over several years, there is a wholesome desire for variety in the minds of the students themselves. They want a change, and there is no change so interesting as that from form to colour. It is not proved that colour can be taught, and it is proverbially impossible to argue about it. Our impressions concerning it

[1] This curious sentence, which mixes up the varieties of mankind of all ages with the modelling which completes the beauty of a work not designated, may be taken as a proof that the eminent writer on artistic education might have profited by some literary training.

are always strictly personal. My own impression about the colouring that comes out of French schools is that, with a few exceptions, it is crude, and very inferior to the drawing. However, whether the result be in itself satisfactory or not, the pupil does at least gain practice in colouring, and that from the best of all models, a naked human being. It is sometimes thought that pupils may be best initiated into colour by copying bright chromatic objects such as butterflies and flowers or the plumage of tropical birds. This is due to the childish and barbarous confusion between colour and colours. A naked man—say with brown eyes and hair and very little red in his cheeks—is a much better study than a humming-bird; and the palette used by Etty in his studies from life—a palette of extreme simplicity and made up of the commonest pigments—is better for early practice than that which would be necessary to imitate one gleam of the humming-bird's iridescent throat. It was a mistake on the part of Ingres to say that colour is easy, but he might have affirmed that it is only too easy to lay very bright colours side by side upon canvas. The reader may, if he is elderly, remember years when many of the English artists who at that time were young and enthusiastic, but did not know very much about painting, were engaged in a sort of competition for intensity of hue. If, on a ground of pure flake white, you lay certain pigments one over another, not thickly but so as to make them palpitate, and if you are careful to put certain other colours close to them for contrast, you can effectually dazzle the eyes. This is the simple application of a well-known receipt, like the art of dyeing. When, however, you come to paint a study from a naked figure that offers no brilliant colours, and have to do it with a dull palette, there is nothing for you but to learn the very art of painting itself. In a word, the advantage of the figure as a model for colour is that it forces the student to *paint*, and will not permit him to amuse himself with anything like heraldry or illumination.

It is, I believe, an undisputed truth that form can be taught far more surely and satisfactorily than colour, because faults can be more positively demonstrated. There is, however, a sense in which severe discipline is equally valuable in both. It is the best protection of the student against the unenlightened opinion of people ignorant of art; it gives him a ground of his own to stand upon; it establishes him from the beginning in a sort of professional esoteric wisdom which is, and ought to be, quite independent of the tastes of the outside world. The student works only for those who know. If he has to do a sketch for a composition he knows that the forms are not expected to be finished. If he sketches roughly and rapidly for colour he knows that the intelligent master will not look for anything else. Even in a finished colour-study

the student has the comfortable assurance that a very plain unattractive method of painting will be not only tolerated but approved, that he is not called upon to be charming, dexterous, or attractive. "It appears to me obvious," says Mr. Poynter, "that if, in making his study, he can so match on his canvas the colours and tone of the object he is painting that an exact resemblance shall result, nothing further can be wished for. . . . The right tones placed in the right places and the work is done. That is the whole mystery of painting for a student."

This is very different from the varieties of encouragement or discouragement that a student is likely to get from his relations. Rough notes for composition will strike them as ill-drawn; notes of colour, especially in oil, will seem to them what they call "daubs," and the less of trick and prettiness there is in the young man's work the more despairing is likely to be their view of his future prospects.

I have said more about French teaching than about English in this chapter for two reasons, one being that French teaching is really more familiar to me, and the other, because I believe that under the keepership of Mr. Calderon the influence of the Royal Academy is likely to produce a beneficial change in the practice of young men who prepare themselves for its classes. It would therefore be a mistake to condemn, as if it were a permanent national error, that tendency to foolish finish in the study itself, which used to be the peculiarly English waste of time. On one point in art-education the English are greatly superior to the French. So far as I know, they associate art with civilisation, whereas in French schools of art, not excepting the *École des Beaux Arts* itself, we see the wisest technical discipline completely separated from any idea of social discipline, and the students behave sometimes as children let loose (for example, when they ride cock-horse on their easels round the room), sometimes like lunatics (as when they set up their easels in a row and fling stools at them), and sometimes like wild animals (as when they yell and howl like jackals or hyænas). When occasionally allowed to eat in the establishment, during the contest for the *Prix de Rome*, we are told that they will break the plates and glasses and throw eggs at each others' faces. This is only uncivilised, but there have been occasions, in their *brimades*,[1] when their proceedings, instead of being merely silly or noisy, became truly diabolical. These doings are not tolerated at the Royal Academy, nor in any other English school of art.

[1] The French word *brimade* is untranslatable. The dictionaries give "fagging" for it, but there is no real fagging in France. *Brimade* means the torture and persecution of one by many, the one being generally a new pupil.

Lastly, I write it with regret, but a certain proportion of the pictures exhibited in France by men who have passed through important private *ateliers*, and through the *École des Beaux Arts*, must be accepted as plain evidence that the education has been simply technical, and has not had a civilising influence. Pictures are exhibited by young men fresh from these schools, which show great manual power along with coarseness or callousness of feeling, and an absolute deficiency of taste. Unfortunately, too, the manual cleverness displayed makes the mental insensibility pass, and gives it even the prestige of authority. Now, there was a time when we used to be told, and when many of us fondly believed and repeated, that the fine arts were a civilising influence, but how can we maintain such a pleasing theory when we see them employed to express a perfectly barbarous state of mind—a state of mind that dwells with satisfaction upon scenes of the most brutal cruelty and lust—a state of mind more nearly resembling the dreadful calm of a Roman watching the slaughter in the arena than the sensitiveness of a modern European? It is not from effeminate delicacy of nerve, but from awakened pity and sympathy and increased strength of imagination, that the civilised man shrinks from thinking about those horrors to which he can bring no remedy. The past is past, and the best that can be said about its cruelties is that the victims writhe no more.

CHAPTER V

THE STUDY OF THE NUDE

IT is always difficult for people whose culture has been of opposite kinds to arrive at a common understanding. Here is a word, the *nude*, which conveys the most different ideas to the clergyman, the middle-class respectable provincial woman, and the artist who has passed through the schools. The first sees in it a falling off from ecclesiastical civilisation (always extremely clothed) and a return to a kind of Paganism; the second sees only a shameless immodesty; whilst to the third, the artist, the word "nude" conveys simply the idea of discipline in study, as the word "grammar" does to a scholar, or "dissection" to a physiologist.

The current objection is that men are not purely spiritual beings, but animals with natural instincts, and an idea prevails that clothing is a protection against these. Amongst the much-clothed Europeans there is a belief that the sight of the body is a peril for morals, though Europeans of both sexes do not shrink from travelling in countries where nudity is habitual. The repugnance to it is in great part affected, in deference to public opinion. Even when sincere it may be little more than a shock of surprise caused by the unaccustomed, surprise that would be speedily removed by the habit of working from the life. Such is the inconsistency of our conventionalism, that degrees of nudity in women are modest in the evening which would be indecorous in earlier hours. Again, with reference to the pursuits of artists themselves, it is well known to all who are interested in the fine arts that men study from the nude in great capitals, where their pursuit is tolerated, whilst the same artists could not work from the life in any small provincial town without exciting a local scandal.

"The Life" to an artist, means what the Bible means to a Protestant theologian. It is the abundant source of divine truth, the one object of study that can never fail and never be exhausted. The study of it is

the way, and the only way, to excellence, to perfection in practice. Day by day, year after year, he who drinks at that well of truth finds his strength renewed. Those who have come to it most frequently all tell the same tale. They all say that the knowledge gained at this source surpasses all other knowledge, and even includes it, at least in the sense of making it an easy conquest afterwards. The fact is undeniable that, in the graphic and plastic arts, the most various kinds of excellence, apparently quite unconnected with the study of the living body, appear when it is most assiduously pursued, and never appear in times or countries where it is neglected. It might be thought, for example, that landscape-painting was quite independent of this study, as it is certainly practised on different principles—for colour, effect, and sentiment rather than form—yet it is a significant fact that great landscapes have never been painted in any age or country where men did not study the naked figure from the life. In the ages when religious authority made that study impossible, and compelled the artist to copy stiff vestments instead of the human body, landscape backgrounds were like the attempts of children. Not only have great landscape-painters been contemporary with painters of the naked figure, but they have lived in the same cities, and more or less under the same academic influences. Claude was born in Lorraine, but did not live there; he lived in Rome, where the study of the figure had been carried to perfection by Raphael and Michael Angelo. Turner lived immediately under the influence of the English Royal Academy, and throughout life was strongly attached to it both as an institution and by personal ties, one of his dearest friends being Chantrey the sculptor. Constable was an Academy student, and his friend Leslie said, "I have seen no studies made by Constable at the Academy from the Antique, but *many chalk drawings and oil paintings from the living model*, all of which have great breadth of light and shade, though they are sometimes defective in outline." In 1802, Constable wrote a letter to a friend about anatomy. "I am so much more interested in the study than I expected, *and feel my mind so generally enlarged by it*, that I congratulate myself on being so fortunate as to have attended these lectures." The experience of form and colour gained in painting from the living model helped Constable to see landscape in masses without losing himself in details of leaves and twigs, whilst the study of anatomy enlarged his mind, as he says, by giving it sound ideas of construction. Corot, the most famous of modern Continental landscape-painters, lived in Paris at a time when the study of the naked figure was most seriously taught by Ingres; and although Corot did not put much drawing into his works, it is clearly evident, from the grace and style with

MARSYAS

BRONZE STATUETTE

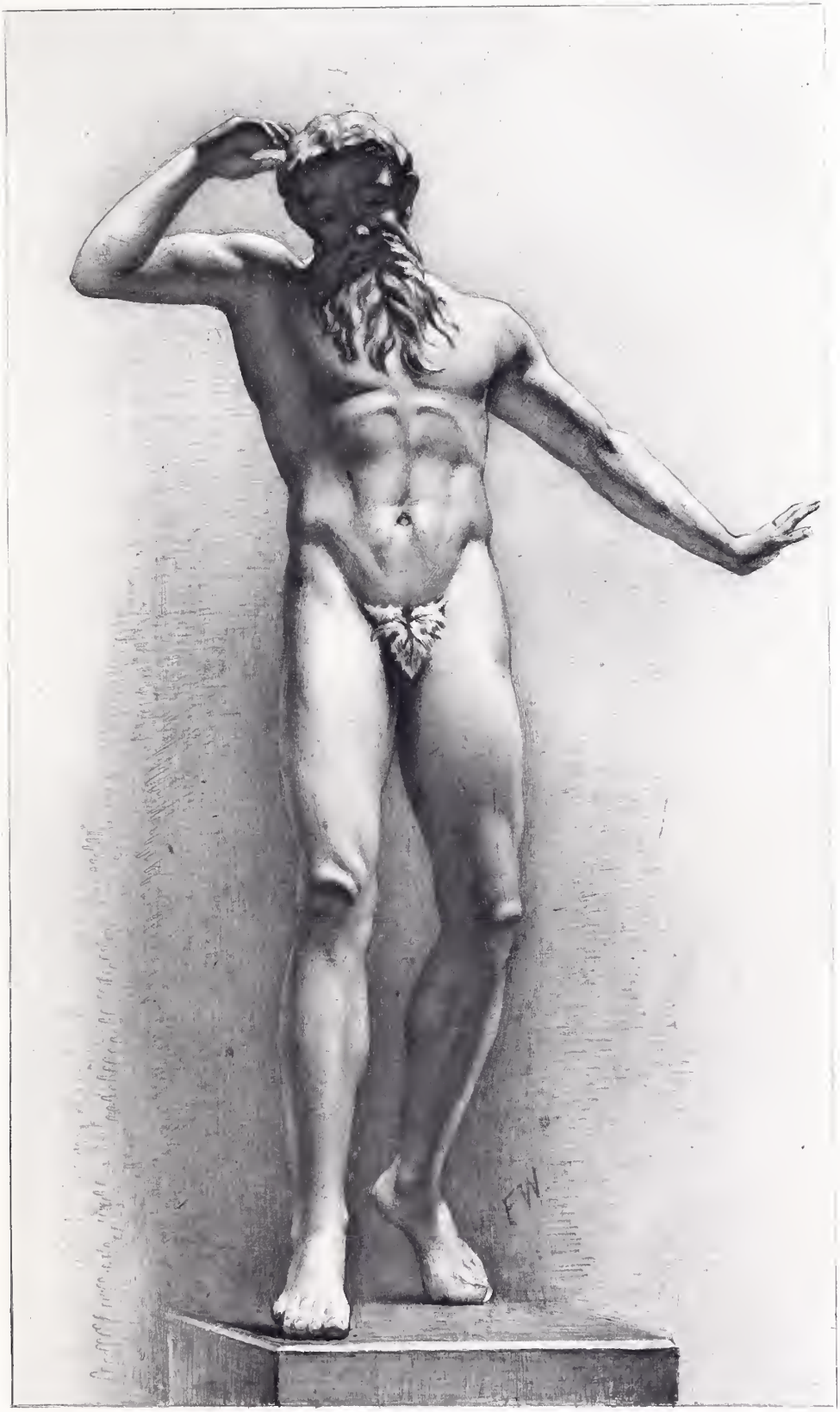
HYALOGRAPH DRAWN BY F. WALENN

(*British Museum*)

GIVEN as a fine and animated example of well-developed manly form holding an intermediate position between the slight forms of the Satyr with the Infant Bacchus and the thick limbs of the Hercules Reposing. This figure indicates activity and amply sufficient athletic power without that excess of it which exhibits itself in useless feats of strength.

The exact meaning of the attitude, which seems very expressive and significant, must be a matter of conjecture, as we do not know how the figure was grouped with another. That other is believed to have been Athene.

The statuette is from Patras, and belongs to the fourth century B.C.



IMP WITTMANN PARIS

which he introduced nude or semi-nude figures, that he had been strongly influenced by a very mature kind of figure-painting. Corot was himself a far more *mature* figure-painter than Botticelli, for example, though he had nothing of Botticelli's linear discipline. He painted sometimes from the model, and always believed that one of his models, who posed in his studio, lost his life in consequence of the coldness of the room. There are certain qualities even in Corot's trees which are never seen in the flat and cut-out representations of trees that occur in primitive art, that is, in art produced where the naked figure is not studied.

In ornamental work of all kinds nothing of first-rate excellence has ever been produced at any great distance, either of time or space, from a school of painting founded on the life. I am, of course, fully aware that much well-invented ornament was produced in our own Middle Ages, chiefly from leaves and flowers, whilst in Mahometan countries such as Turkey and Persia, where the study of man is forbidden by religious ordinance, we find endless examples of elaborate ornament in textile manufactures and in utensils or on decorative objects in pottery or metal. It might be objected, too, that there is much delightful ornament on Japanese vases and arms; but the Japanese are rather outside the question, because the sight of the naked figure is as familiar to their artists as it was to the ancient Greeks. Keeping, then, to our own mediæval work, and to that of Mahometan ornamental designers, and fully acknowledging the beauty of it in its own place, where figure-drawing of an educated kind is not present, I can only say that neither Christendom nor Islam ever produced any ornamental art good enough to be associated with learned figure design. The semi-pagan Renascence, on the contrary, *did* produce ornament to bear that severest of all tests, and the improvement is attributable to the study of the naked figure and to nothing else. I cherish no prejudice against mediæval work, having, like most Englishmen of my time who care for art at all, passed through my own mediæval period. I have been passionately interested in Gothic architecture, heraldry, and illumination, but there came a time when my eyes were opened to the far superior qualities of design apparent in the delicate carvings of the Renascence and in the best French work of our own day, and I soon discovered that these qualities were not the effect of any unaccountable efflorescence of talent, but were always explicable by study from the life.

It is sometimes erroneously supposed that in Gothic sculpture, such as that upon the west front of the cathedral at Amiens, the floral and leafy ornaments are good and the human figures not so good, because the artists were clever enough to deal with ornament, but not, to the same degree,

with man. The case may be better understood by a reference to figures as they are introduced by landscape-painters into their work. Suppose you paint a group of trees, and a cottage, exactly as a clever landscape-painter would paint them, and, after that, suppose you introduce a figure, if you deal with it in the same manner as the other objects, that is, for tone and colour rather than form, you are sure to get a landscape-painter's *figurine*. So, in Gothic sculpture, carve your floral ornaments as they are carved at Amiens, then undertake the sculpture of statues in the same sense, and you come inevitably to the kind of statuary you find there—statuary which is acceptable up to a certain point, that is, for character and attitude and the architectural disposal of drapery, but in which you will not discover so much as a finger or a toe that an educated sculptor would acknowledge. If now you pass to the decorative designs in the *loggie* of the Vatican, executed under the superintendence of Raphael, you meet with a variety and prodigality of fanciful invention fully equal to the variety in a Gothic palace, and here, too, both the vegetable and animal kingdoms are made to contribute materials; but you will not find a fruit, or a flower, or a leaf that does not call for good figure-drawing as its accompaniment. This relation between quality of ornament and science in figure-design is so inevitable, so inherent in the nature of things, that when modern French decorative sculptors, who have drawn from the nude in the *ateliers*, have been set to imitate Gothic ornament for purposes of restoration or imitation, they have been compelled *to affect ignorance in their representations of Man*, that all might be of a piece.

On the other side then, of art, not only is the study of the naked figure the basis of all painting and sculpture that deals with the human form, but it is one of those widely influential studies that have a favourable influence on others with which, at first sight, they have no apparent connection. If the world could be deprived of this study by the laws of nations, the closing of life schools would be followed by a general decadence. All figure-painting would go down at once, sculpture would become Gothic carving, landscape would survive with difficulty, and decorative art would be on a level with that of the heraldic illuminator. In a hundred years the fine arts would be again in those dark ages when the Church, in the name of the spirit, discouraged attention to the body.

Of this, however, there is no fear. Modern liberty of thought and recurrence to nature in all things as the source of truth have installed the study of the nude for art as securely as that of anatomy for science. The only serious opposition to it is made, not in the name of a Church, but of morality. The objection is not specially ecclesiastical.

SILENUS

Original Wood-Engraving

By Pierre Gusman

Original wood-engraving can hardly be done directly from nature on the wood. What is meant by it is that the artist draws on the wood himself and engraves his own drawing.

The advantage of uniting the draughtsman and engraver in one person are that there cannot be any conflict of interpretation, and also that the engraver is not likely to neglect any quality in the work of the designer.

I selected this woodcut, hitherto unpublished, for its quality, and also because it illustrates the advantage of nudity in the chest and shoulders as an accompaniment to the naked face. It thus escapes from one of the greatest difficulties in modern portraits of men with white collars and black coats. Observe, for example, the peculiar effect of the two white collar-corners to right and left of the beard in the portrait of Tennyson.

P. Gusman fils
Phie et Sc.

The subject is a most difficult one to discuss, but there are some aspects of it that may possibly be new to the reader. Let me first invite his attention to the completely neutral character of the study of nature so far as morality is concerned. The work done in a life school is not moral, like an essay in favour of chastity, neither is it in the slightest degree immoral, either directly or by suggestion, as so much literature is. This neutral character of study from the life soon produces its own effect on the minds of students, and it ought to be remembered that they are led up to it by the study of antique marbles which are almost invariably severe and calm, whether they happen to be draped or not. In a place like the life school of the Royal Academy there is no encouragement for any other ideas than those of work and discipline, of which the model himself, or herself, sets the example by the patient exercise of a very trying profession. The models are well aware of the moral protection they enjoy from the neutral character of their work. They are a respectable class of people, almost of necessity, as the loss of firmness implied in a loose and disorderly life would of itself disqualify any one for a business which is all patience. They often take a serious and intelligent interest in art. M. Müntz, the learned Professor at the *École des Beaux Arts*, tells me that a model there, possessing eight thousand pounds, bequeathed the money for an artistic use. The interest of it is destined to provide models for students competing for the *prix de Rome*.

Now, if from artistic we turn to literary studies, we cannot, I think, pretend to claim for them anything like that neutral character as to morals which belongs to the artistic study of simple nature. I could easily adduce overwhelming evidence on this subject, but there is a conventionalism which permits the printing and dissemination of ancient books, and even places them in the hands of youth, whilst it does not permit the quotation of incriminating passages. In this manner the liberty of the press is accorded to authors who lived long before the invention of printing, whilst it is partially denied to ourselves. I can only say, then, that any young man who reads Horace or Virgil, or even Plato, or moralists like Plutarch and Marcus Aurelius, has met with references to ancient and horrible vices which compel him to think about them if he would understand his author, and force his mind out of the condition in which it has not to trouble itself about morality, one way or the other. This may be an advantage as leading to a clearer understanding of the abysmal depths of possible human iniquity; I only say that it is incompatible with that serene condition of the mind in which it does innocent work that has no reference to immorality. And I will venture to add that the student whose thoughts

are neither moral nor immoral, but simply and innocently observant, has a better chance of keeping his mind healthy than if he wept for the sins of the world.

Another consideration not to be lost sight of is the habit of coolly criticising nature which accompanies experience in drawing. That habit is intellectual; it belongs essentially to the intellect, and is as much outside of sexual passions as the criticism of music or architecture. The imperfection of nature strikes the artist as frequently as it strikes the man of science. The evidences of it always become more obvious with the increase of our knowledge. It is explained in various ways; the theological explanation is the Fall of Man; another is the absence of care, in Nature, for the individual. In the experience of artists the perception that nature is imperfect is the cause of a peculiar kind of dissatisfaction, necessary to art, as it impels the mind towards the ideal. The dissatisfaction of the artistic mind with nature, its reasoned criticism of nature, its quest of the ideal, are evidences of a state of feeling that is very widely removed from the passions of the lower animals, either sexual or aggressive. It may perhaps be possible to trace back our æsthetic instincts to a male animal's pride in its own strength or desire for its female, but it is like telling a singer that his voice is only the cry of a brute that has been gradually modulated by culture.

In concluding this chapter a word may be said on a subject now more and more gaining in importance — the artistic education of women, and especially their admission to life schools. Fully persuaded that all serious study of the body is in itself innocent, I still remember that in all high civilisations that have hitherto existed a certain delicacy has been attached to the ideal of maidenhood, so that there were truths in nature that it was deemed better for the maiden not to know. It is easy to represent this as a prejudice, but the prejudice is founded on a delicacy of sentiment that it ought not to be necessary to explain. Well, there is a tendency very distinctly visible in our time to ignore certain old-fashioned delicacies of sentiment, and I think this tendency is unfortunate not only for girls themselves but for all society. It is good for them and it is good for us that our respect for them should be mingled with a guarding tenderness. Girls may draw from the life and remain pure in mind; the study of the nude is neutral in respect of practical morality, but here we have to do with a finer and more exquisite sentiment than the sense of definite right and wrong. The most advanced young women of the present day feel themselves unfairly treated if they are not permitted an equal share in all masculine studies, including this study of life. Some of them take the

matter into their own hands and work from the most naked nature in the same room and at the same time with students of the other sex. They are, no doubt, simply hard workers who are anxious to get on. Nobody would be unjust or cruel enough to accuse them of misconduct, or even of levity; they do their work, no doubt, in the same serious spirit as that of a female medical student who is occupied with a dissection, and their own feeling probably is the sense of conscious courage in the pursuit of a certain kind of learning, no worse than reading Greek. Still, one feels for them a certain commiseration. They have sacrificed, not the flower of maidenhood, but the delicate perfume of the flower; they have lost an intangible something that can never be replaced, and in exchange for what? For a bare chance in a profession strewn with the wrecks of human lives—a profession in which all the energy of manhood is not sure of reward, and in which the highest feminine success hitherto recorded has been that of a popular cattle-painter.

CHAPTER VI

CLOTHING AND NAKEDNESS IN FINISHED ART

THE nude is absolutely necessary for study; is it necessary or desirable in the finished picture or the statue?

The distinct nature of the two cases is not always sufficiently realised. From time to time the sense of public propriety is offended, in a curiously intermittent way, by the nudity of pictures in the exhibitions, and during these times of hyperæsthesia in the public conscience the delusion always prevails that if clothing could be imposed upon works of art the study of the nude figure might be abandoned. Possibly it might if the figures were all hidden beneath plate-armour or ecclesiastical vestments. A shining cuirass or a stiff embroidered chasuble would spare the necessity for studying either chest or back; even the lawn-sleeves of an English bishop would make the drawing of an arm superfluous, and the long cassock of the French priest might hide much ignorance of the leg. If, however, there is to be any drapery in the classical sense of the term, the study of the nude must still, it is to be feared, continue.

The question of study being decided beyond dispute, there does undoubtedly remain the very different question of nudity in works of art that are not studies, but intended to be the ornaments of our homes or to give pleasure of a high kind to all classes of the people. The tradition of art, from the supremacy of ancient Greece to the present supremacy of France, has been persistently in favour of the nude or the classically draped, except during the interim of the Middle Ages. The doubt, then, might be set at rest by experience, were it not that it comes up again with every fresh assertion of the rights of realism. In our own time realism is more self-asserting than ever; it claims the right to represent everything as it is with reference to truth only, and therefore without any aspiration after the ideal or any preoccupation about taste; and it cannot be denied that this realistic spirit does, in fact, open a question which, without it, might have

Chromolithographie Bernard Valadon & Cie, Paris

been considered closed. The ideal is a clothing in itself, like Lady Godiva's chastity; realism is the removal of it.

The times we live in are remarkable for no artistic development so much as the growth of manual skill without mental grace or delicacy. We are therefore in perilous days for the nude in art when men can paint it so truly that to look at their picture is like peeping into a bathroom, and when they bring to it so little imagination that they keep us in the common world. Rembrandt did this occasionally from sheer lack of the kind of ideality which is needed; the moderns appear to do it in cynical indifference.

An extreme instance has occurred recently with reference to the "Olympia" of Manet. His admirers wished to present that picture to the Louvre, but the authorities refused permission, granting, however, a place in the Luxembourg, on the understanding that it should not imply a subsequent entry to the greater gallery. "What," it may be asked, "can be the ground of exclusion? What objection can be made to the 'Olympia' of Manet which is not equally cogent against the 'Nymph and Satyr' of Titian?" Both the figures are reclining, and in Titian's picture there is a plain suggestion in the curiosity of the satyr which Manet has avoided; the other figure in the "Olympia" is a negro woman-servant who brings a bouquet. The artistic intention for contrast in colour is exactly the same in both cases, Titian seeking it in the brown skin of the satyr, and Manet in the black one of the negress and the variegated hues of the flowers. Why, then, is the Titian not considered an indecent picture whilst the Manet is doubtful as to decency? The answer is that the "Nymph" is an ideal of feminine beauty, whilst "Olympia" is a real girl to be met with anywhere in Paris. Her shape is vulgar, though natural, and it is this natural vulgarity that makes her seem almost indecent, though her attitude is extremely modest, and her attendant, if of a different colour, is of her own sex.

Amongst living painters I may mention two very celebrated ones whose treatment of the nude affords a similar opportunity for comparison. Sir Frederick Leighton, like all painters of a strongly academic turn of mind, delights in the study of the nude, and always *thinks in the nude*, if I may so express the habit of thought which conceives figures as men and women first, and clothes them, if necessary, afterwards. His draperies are sometimes extremely studied and elaborate in their folds, but they are never used to spare thought or labour in the setting-up of the figure itself; we see that the artist enjoys the study of drapery as

a secondary pursuit, but that the life is never forgotten. A painter with these instincts might have been more at home in the Italian Renascence than in the English Victorian age, yet for some reasons in the deepest nature of the fine arts, he has quietly pursued the study of the body without giving offence to any but the most Philistine English. There are two distinct reasons that may account for this. The first is ideality in conception, and the second is a careful, or rather instinctive, avoidance of vulgar realism in technical execution. The mere love of the line, which is conspicuous in all the President's work, is of itself a security against realism, because it leads the artist to seek for a beauty never perfectly realised in Nature, and also makes him insist upon it to a degree that carries his work beyond the imitative stage. In the frescoes at South Kensington the linear definition is so firm that there is no pretence to the popular truth of effect, whilst the composition is so obvious that the least critical visitor feels it to be appropriate only in the realm of abstract art.

If from Sir Frederick Leighton we pass to M. Gérôme, we find a remarkable power of accuracy in drawing with very little ideality in conception. A picture by M. Gérôme was exhibited in the Salon of 1885, and entitled "Grande Piscine de Brousse." The subject is a large public bath for women at Brusa in Asiatic Turkey, and about a dozen bathers are enjoying either the bath or the rest after it. A picture of this kind may be painted quite without any perverse intention, but the extreme fidelity of the drawing in it, and the want of idealisation alike in the forms and the attitudes of the women, place us in the position of some over-curious spectator who has bribed the bath-keeper for a furtive inspection of the scene. The feelings excited by a work of this class are as different as possible from the charm of the ideal. We see at once that the painter has told us the plain truth, and that he supposes we shall like to know it. He offers us knowledge—too much knowledge—in place of a dream of beauty; and as in these matters truth is the real nakedness, his picture does not appeal to our æsthetic sense, but to a kind of curiosity best described by the French word *inavouable*.

The realism of Gérôme is to some extent neutralised by the small scale of his figures, and by the refinement of his execution. When, however, the naked figure is painted the size of life, with literal veracity joined to a combined coarseness of sentiment and cleverness of handling, the result does unquestionably place the art of painting upon a very low moral and intellectual level, and does go far to prove that it may become, in unworthy hands, a degrading instead of a civilising agency. Nothing is to be said on the side of art in favour of such works as I am now

alluding to, for the reason that the refinements of art are not to be found in them, whilst at the same time they are quite devoid of intellectual interest, and might have been painted by craftsmen destitute of culture. The return to mere nakedness, without any elevation by the ideal, is in truth a kind of abandonment of civilisation, a casting aside of all social dignities and distinctions. The naked figure, though at first it may seem to represent man with the most perfect frankness, tells little or nothing about him except the physical condition of his body; it gives little insight into his habits or mode of life. Napoleon's expression, "There never was a naked King," whilst intended to imply that a king needs much more than clothing, is true also in the literal sense that a king is not a king without his clothes.

The nudity of the body has a destructive effect on the intellectual expression of the face. The rivalry between body and mind is set up in the nude figure to the advantage of the body; or rather the whole man becomes a body only, of which the face is merely a part. Hence the right treatment of the naked figure requires a minimum of expression in the face; and the finest art has the calm of the Greek statues—a calm evidently intentional, as it was contrary to the lively habits of the Athenians. If this rule is neglected or set at defiance, we come to the vivacious sculpture of Carpeaux, in which the faces are too animated, too conscious, for a right association with the nudity of the body. This is not objectionable in a bust like the laughing Satyr in the Louvre. For the same reason the bust permits all the varieties of intellectual expression which are suitable in clothed statues, and most suitable in those which are heavily robed, like Woolner's statue of Lord Bacon.

The conclusion is that the representation of the nude in works of art (as distinguished from studies which do not here concern us) is permissible only when it is elevated by idealisation. If the idealisation is truly ennobling and thorough, so as to "inform," in the ancient sense of the word, the whole being of the painted man or woman, then the nude is not only a pure kind of art, but in a certain intelligible sense the very purest of all, as it has been chastened by a special purification. When, however, we pass from the question of purity to that of intellectual rank, we enter upon considerations of a more complex order. Painters of the nude have been in the habit of looking upon their own department of art as the highest, perhaps because it is so essentially academic—so directly founded upon academic discipline and that in which such discipline counts for most; whilst the lack of it is most visible here, and results in the most undeniable incompetence. A good picture of the nude is for painters a scholarly performance, and they value

it as sound Latin composition is valued in a university. The claim for supreme rank is, however, somewhat difficult to maintain in favour of an art which can never be the most intellectual. I have a hearty respect for Etty as a colourist, but his life's work, however rich in a knowledge of flesh-colour, is so poor intellectually as to contain hardly any evidence of mind. That of Ingres shows more mind, but not in his naked figures, except perhaps in the calm gaze of Œdipus as he thinks and listens in the dread presence of the Sphinx. A painter devoted to the nude as Etty was might perhaps reply that what scholars and writers call mind is not the highest power in a graphic or plastic art; that in such art we are in a region of beauty rather than of thought or speculation; and that Etty's very rare power of painting flesh placed him in the highest rank amongst painters, though his women have neither the wit of Beatrix nor the intellect of Aspasia. This would drive us to the conclusion that the most effectual powers in these arts are rather the sensuous than the intellectual, and would justify the old antagonism of educators against them as being a seduction leading men away from intellectual pursuits rather than a discipline that leads up to them.

On the moral side the usual Philistine objection deserves attention when the art is that of realism, and there may be another objection that would even include the most eminently ideal interpretations of the naked figure. Simple people imagine that there is in them an immodest intention remote from the artist's thought, which they are unable to understand. For him the nude is the most serious study he can undertake; for them it is lascivious or indecorous. Then occurs one of those cases of "offence" alluded to in the New Testament, when experience has not sufficient consideration for ignorance and inexperience, but places or leaves a stumbling-block in its way. One would be glad if certain pictures and statues could be reserved for persons of some culture, who understand the higher forms of art and the serene spirit that leads to their production. This, however, is not a practicable arrangement. The best works of painting and sculpture cannot be excluded from national galleries, nor can the common people be denied an entrance there; so we have the situation, which has often been humorously illustrated, of decent folks who have somehow wandered in and are shocked and perplexed by sights contrary to all that they have been taught about propriety. To place the nude figures in a reserved gallery by themselves would be to do what we most wish to avoid, namely to recognise the vulgar prejudice against them, and to stigmatise the works themselves in a manner which they do not deserve. The only hope is that the scandal may cease through familiarity.

CHAPTER VII

AMATEURSHIP IN THE STUDY OF THE FIGURE

THE word "Amateur" is used in two senses in its own country. In France an amateur is a lover of art whether he practises it or not; in England he is always a lover of art who studies practically and endeavours to produce, but does not work for money. The English use of the word refers, in fact, to the pecuniary question entirely, for all who sell pictures are called "artists," without any consideration for the presence or absence of the artistic faculty, and those who never attempt to sell are "amateurs," whatever may be their gifts.

This use of the terms has fixed itself in the English language as a matter of convenience to avoid the employment of adjectives such as "professional" and "unprofessional," or of explanatory phrases such as "he paints but does not attempt to sell." Still the distinction, as founded upon money, is essentially vulgar, and, what is more, it is often inaccurate and unreal. The men who are called artists, or workers for money, have often done much of their work in direct contradiction to their pecuniary interests and for the sake of art itself. Turner, by his frugal life, soon became completely independent, and made pictures as an expression of his mind, to be kept for the nation; Mr. Watts has for some years been working in the same spirit and with the same intention. Another English painter of the highest distinction showed me some of his works in progress and observed, "I need not tell you that pictures of this kind are in their nature unpopular." Even young students have frequently pursued art at a sacrifice of pecuniary interest, as Corot did when he contentedly embraced poverty and landscape-painting, though a good commercial position was within his reach. Mr. W. M. Hunt, the American painter, observed, when he studied in Paris, that the young men never talked about money. "In Couture's *atelier*, among all the boys there, you never would hear them talking of what people in general thought of their work. It was nothing to them. Neither

would you hear about orders or chances of selling pictures. Not a word of painting with the idea of making money by it. Occasionally a boy would say he must go off to the Louvre that afternoon and do some copying to pay for his lodging. But that was the only time when you would hear a dollar mentioned."

It would be desirable, though it is difficult to introduce a new habit, that the word "artist" should be reserved for a higher use, as it is in literature. Here it is carefully kept for those authors who practise literature *as an art*, in distinction to those who practise it for some purpose outside art and in some manner that is not in itself artistic. The word "artist" is very rarely applied to an author, and then with a special significance, and as a rare distinction. It was applied to Goethe both because he composed like an artist and because he had the sense that understands and sympathises with art. We ourselves say that Lord Tennyson is an artist; one might even go so far as to say that whilst Shakespeare's nature is the most powerful and the most versatile, Tennyson's is the most purely artistic amongst all English literary idiosyncrasies; I mean that the sense of art, the instinctive desire for artistic perfection and success, is most constantly and most unfailingly present in him. On the other hand, we have Mr. Herbert Spencer, a man of immense intellectual calibre, to whom all who think are indebted either for direct help or for some kind of stimulation, yet Mr. Herbert Spencer is not in the least an artist—he has nothing of the artistic power. Browning, in this respect, stood between the complete philosopher and the complete poet. He was sometimes the artist, sometimes the thinker, and passed from one condition of mind to the other in his writings, often quite suddenly and unexpectedly. The case of Wordsworth is one of the most interesting with regard to the artist nature, as his work is occasionally artistic by a happy inspiration, and at other times absolutely the opposite—that is, the work of a moralist whose method is the negation of art. If now we apply the test to painters, reserving the title of "artist" for those who have always art for a motive, and who work constantly in a state of artistic feeling, I should say that Turner was most essentially an artist, and Canaletti never an artist at all; that Stothard was certainly an artist, but hardly Landseer; whilst amongst Frenchmen I should have no doubt about the artistic nature of Géricault, but should say that David, though severely disciplined and admirably dignified in his intellectual intention, was seldom truly an artist either in motive or in feeling.

Now, amongst the numerous company of amateurs the probability is that the artistic nature occurs not less frequently than it does amongst pro-

fessional men. The genuine artist may be born in any situation; his gift comes to him at birth; it is not a prize bestowed by an academy. A good critic, examining the attempts of amateurs, might be able to distinguish the artistic from the inartistic natures; he might be able to detect the presence of invention, the sense of composition, the eye for colour, the incommunicable grace that might one day have developed into nobility or elegance of style. But all this would be like examining plants that had never flowered, and discovering by the aid of science what their floral glory might have been. It is a melancholy, but not altogether an unprofitable occupation. The dull critic sees only the actual product, the intelligent one goes beyond and thinks of the mind itself, with what were once its possibilities. Unfortunately, the one decisive experiment that would settle the question is an experiment that can never be made. It would be to have Raphael and Titian created over again and permitted to work only as amateurs. We should then see how far the gifts of drawing and colour could develop themselves in an unprofessional career. We may be sure, however, that the laws of man's nature and development would be rigorously the same for these men of genius in any case, that they would accomplish nothing without work, and that the result would answer exactly to the quantity of work done and the wisdom with which it was directed. The amateur may rest assured that whilst he probably had the same natural gifts as the professional workman, he is undoubtedly subject to the same laws, and that Nature no more makes an exception in his favour than she has an especial care or tenderness for the amateur sailor or mountaineer. Partial in the bestowal of her gifts, she displays a rigorous indifference in her discipline.

I hope I have disposed of the theory that an artist is a painter or sculptor who works for money. The genuine artist labours to express himself, because expression in the form of art is a necessity of his nature, and his success is to have put his conceptions adequately into visible forms. There is, however, in all handicrafts—and painting and sculpture *include* handicraft—a tendency to produce a spirit of trades-unionism. The craftsman is jealous of his rights as a skilled hand, and is ready to turn upon the amateur with the question, "Who are you, and where were you apprenticed to the trade?" If this peculiar kind of jealousy does not exist in literature it is because literature happily does not include a handicraft.

Even in the graphic and plastic arts the artist cannot be produced by rule. A regular apprenticeship does not always give the expected result, nor is it absolutely essential to success. There are numerous instances of students who have gone through the French *atelier* or the

English Academy to become only craftsmen—hardly even that—and there have been a few examples of men, undeniably artists, who never went through any systematic training in the handicraft of art. I have mentioned Géricault as an example of a real artist; well, many who are called "amateurs" have gone through a severer and more persistent training than that which Géricault received from his masters, Vernet and Guérin. He studied horses for a very short time under Vernet, and afterwards worked under Guérin for six months. Next he studied privately, according to a plan of his own preserved in written notes—a plan including anatomy, antiquities, music, and Italian. One year he gave up the month of February to the style of great masters and to practising composition "without quitting the house, *and always alone.*" Troyon, too, was unquestionably an artist, but he never had a master. He received a little elementary teaching from his godfather, M. Riocreux, who was a painter of flowers on porcelain at Sèvres. Then he began to work from nature, and one day met with an artist in the wood near St. Cloud, Camille Roqueplan, who explained to him some of those necessities of art which the unaided student of nature is so long in finding out. Roqueplan gave Troyon permission to call upon him, in his own studio, where the young man received further counsels, and these, with the sight of works by Jules Dupré and others, constituted the whole of his education. Surely many an amateur has had a more rigorous training than that! Nobody who knows anything about art would dispute the right of Mr. Watts to the title of "artist." He is an artist in the most essential meaning of the term. Whatever he does, the idea of art is always as present with him as it is with Tennyson. Well, he received scarcely more of a technical education than Troyon. He remained only "a few weeks" in the schools of the Academy, and afterwards used to call upon Behnes as Troyon did upon Roqueplan. Mr. Watts has said himself, "I received no teaching; I visited no painter's studio or *atelier*. Disappointed as to the Royal Academy, I used to haunt the studio of Behnes, but I never studied under him in the ordinary acceptation of the term." In short, Mr. Watts was taught a little drawing, and gained a knowledge of a sculptor's ways by watching them, but was never taught to paint. I myself have known several amateurs who have had a far more systematic training than that. I remember one in particular, a rich young Englishman, who worked steadily in Paris for many months each year, and who could paint a study from life in a manner absolutely indistinguishable from that of his professional brethren.

When one of the most illustrious artists of our age answers exactly to the current definition of our amateurs, since he does not work for money, and has received no technical training, it may perhaps be time to abandon the old prejudices. An amateur of independent fortune would, in fact, be more favourably placed than any one for artistic success, and it may be shown that many of the most distinguished artists became, in fact, amateurs of independent fortune as soon as they had amassed enough to live upon, and could afford to work for artistic purposes alone. The real difficulty is not a question of money but one of time. The amateur who is master of his time may unquestionably become an artist if naturally gifted, and if he has been permitted to begin early. The amateur who has some other predominant occupation need not hope to overcome the purely technical difficulties. Let us state the case fairly: in the art that deals with the human figure an external and visible success is not merely difficult for him, it is utterly unattainable. It is not quite unattainable in landscape. There is a Frenchman, M. Pointelin, who is a regular and recognised exhibitor at the *Salon*; he has received the usual series of medals given to a successful French artist, and finally the Legion of Honour. M. Pointelin has succeeded in painting by attempting nothing beyond the expression of a genuine sentiment, through simple subjects and effects. He is undeniably an artist, yet the main business of his life is to be a professor of mathematics in the university. This is an instance that cannot be paralleled amongst amateurs who paint the figure. There is no example of an amateur following a profession other than art who has won a strong public position in figure-painting. The reason is the difficulty of drawing the human body. Mr. Poynter affirms that no amount of practice in drawing other objects will enable one to draw that. When we look more closely into the matter we find that the figure demands a *higher* power of draughtsmanship rather than a *peculiar* power. It is not that the figure-draughtsman has acquired a trick of handicraft, but that he draws, of necessity, in a superior way, that is, more accurately and beautifully both in line and in modelling than other draughtsmen, because if he did not his drawing would exhibit its own imperfection much more evidently than theirs.

There is less of trick, less display of an amusing and seductive cleverness, in drawing from the naked figure than is usual in other work. The draughtsman who deals with landscape and picturesque buildings is not only tempted to adopt a "clever," that is a tricky style, but he is expected to do so, and if he dislikes that kind of performance he will seem to be wanting in ability. The naked figure, so far from repelling a serious

worker, makes claims upon all his seriousness. The naked figure is not what is called a picturesque object, like an old fishing-boat that one is expected to sketch and blot with pen and ink in a few minutes. If the reader could only realise how much falsehood and exaggeration go to make what is generally admired as clever and picturesque drawing, he would get sick of the picturesque and of cleverness at the same time, and he would understand how it is that the discipline of the life school is the most steadying and sobering that is to be had in art. The study by Mr. Alma Tadema, in this volume, may be taken as an example. It is as careful and quiet as that of a young student; there is not the slightest display of dexterity; the curves are nowhere exaggerated to get a bold and sweeping line, nor is the modelling exhibited in startling relief, yet all necessary truth is there. However, to execute an unpretending little study like this, the draughtsman must be a very accomplished artist. It is certain that work of this quality would have been beyond even its gifted author itself if he had been tied down to some other profession and permitted to use a pencil only in his leisure hours.

Ought the amateur, then, to deny himself the study of the living form? I have not said so, and have never believed it. The study of nature is open to us all, whether we pursue it by scientific or by artistic methods. If we were to limit our minds to those subjects that we could absolutely master, there would be nothing left for us but the narrowest specialities. We do well to avoid the confusion between knowledge and mastery. They are physiologically different, implying different conditions of the nervous system. Knowledge is simply the enriching of the memory through observation in order to supply data for judgment; mastery implies innumerable repetitions of the same action in order to establish nervous connections between the brain and some other organ such as the larynx of the singer, the fingers of the violinist, or the toes of the public dancer. When there has been practice enough, and the nervous connections have been completely established, actions at first impossible and then difficult become unconscious and automatic, so that the power of the will may be directed to some superior end, such as expression in music or persuasion in oratory, without being embarrassed by those imperfections of nervous connection that are commonly called technical impediments. The truth about skill is recognised in the popular expression "he has it (the accomplishment) at his fingers' ends," meaning that there is now a nervous connection between the ends of his fingers and the brain. The distinction between knowledge and mastery may be best understood by reference to a language. Many Englishmen have a very considerable knowledge of ancient Greek, not one

STUDY OF A GIRL

DRAWN BY ALMA TADEMA, R.A.

REPRODUCED IN HELIOGRAVURE BY BOUSSOD AND VALADON

NOT having seen the model, I cannot say how far the artist has idealised his subject, but think it probable that the drawing is extremely faithful, with a slight idealisation such as a painter of taste usually adds unconsciously to every study. The attitude is at the same time graceful and quite natural. If anybody objects to the absence of drapery, I can but repeat the royal motto, "Honni soit qui mal y pense."

Selected as an example of the degree of thoroughness in study, which is necessary to the training of a great figure-painter. Work of this kind is so far from being idle or frivolous, that it is in itself one of the severest forms of discipline by which the faculty of observation can be educated.

I owe hearty thanks to Mr. Alma Tadema and to Mr. Humphry Ward, the owner of this beautiful study, for their permission to publish it.

Photo-aquatinte Bourgeois, Valadon & Cie Paris

has a mastery of it; for that would imply the power of writing ancient Greek with unconscious facility and of speaking it with Athenian fluency. An intellectual student cannot rationally be forbidden to include the fine arts amongst the subjects of his research. They are as much open to intellectual study as anything else. Every educated man has imperfectly mastered a dozen different studies, and if it is asked "What is the good of them?" the answer is *breadth of mind*, the enlargement of the mind's horizon. Here I am on firm ground, that of universal experience. The fundamental principle of culture, as distinguished from the apprenticeship to a trade, is that the object of it is neither the acquisition of some kind of facility, nor the production of some saleable object, but the enrichment of the student's mind. Or we might define it metaphorically as the opening of kingdoms and worlds, the admission to regions that the absence of culture closes against us. And as the traveller can see and observe without possessing all that comes within his view, so the mind, in its travels, has more need of observation than of mastery. By our study of ancient literature we no more expect to master the languages than our amateur need hope to master the violin, but we obtain an insight into the life and thought of antiquity that no translations give. Even modern languages are beyond mastery, except under special conditions of gifts and opportunities. It takes years of residence in France, with very exceptional powers of observation and imitation, to learn to speak French properly, and only a few natives can speak it with a grace and perfection comparable to the painting of a great artist. Even these few require constant practice either in public speaking or in society; without it, either hesitation comes in, or speech is degraded by an inferior choice of expressions.

I believe the study of art (including music) is the only pursuit in which unprofessional students are set in a class apart and supposed to be wasting their time in a vain and illusory endeavour, or in a nugatory though harmless amusement. The reason is that the amateur is always supposed to have an ambition beyond his powers. The best advice I can offer him is to be as selfish as possible—to work for his own knowledge and not for the praise or pleasure of others, never to show his studies except to those who are aware how difficult art is, and to remain contented with the consciousness of seeing both nature and art *avec des yeux dessillés*.

There is at least one consolation for the unprofessional student of the figure. It is a *positive* study, in which accuracy is sure to be acknowledged. In landscape there is nothing positive—not from the absence of laws in effects of light, or of exquisitely-perfect structure in vegetation, but because nobody thanks the landscape-painter for accuracy in drawing; and those

elements which *are* appreciated in his art—namely, colour and effect, and quality of tone—are beyond ascertainment, and incapable of demonstration. Meissonier is a most careful and accurate draughtsman, but if a landscape-painter drew landscape as Meissonier painted the distance in his "Napoleon III. at Solferino," he would be told that he had neither taste nor imagination, and would see the most loose and negligent drawing preferred to his. It is hardly possible to go beyond Turner in want of accuracy, yet Corot did succeed in surpassing him in the elimination of material substance and structure. In those works of Corot which are now most appreciated there is least of positive reality; and if they are called by names of places situated on some river of France or lake of Italy, they have nothing topographic except the title. During those very years in which Corot was winning fame by substituting the vague for the real, and soft sentiment for hard knowledge, Tadema was diligently earning it by giving a new and welcome precision and exactness to our notions of ancient life. The whole tendency of figure-art has from the first been towards firm knowledge. In early landscape the statements of ascertainable fact were often perfectly decided, and there have been a few earnest and respectable attempts in our own times to reassert the claim of exact drawing; but the success of them has been doubtful from the first, and it may now, I regretfully admit, be taken as finally decided that landscape is not to be the art of the draughtsman, but of the colourist, the composer, and the tone-poet. The study of the figure answers to the science and physical materialism of our age, and is accompanied by the same materialism in its accessories; landscape-painting, like music, is an expression of the dreamy side of the modern mind, and, disregarding what can be measured or dissected, vaguely sets forth what remains to us of hope or reminiscence of a paradise.

CHAPTER VIII

CULTURE GOING BEYOND NATURE

I MAY perhaps be permitted a word of explanation here to prevent a possible misunderstanding. I find that when I have said something merely because it was true, and a neglected truth, it has been assumed that I wished to have it so, which is not a warrantable inference. And, with regard to strict fidelity, certain statements in my writings about the difference between art and nature have been taken to mean that I did not appreciate veracity. The answer is that it is precisely the love of veracity in criticism that so often leads one to make what a lawyer would call damaging admissions.

The simple early creed of all who begin to study art is that if one could copy nature as in a mirror the result would be an excellent picture. In the same manner those who, like myself, are ignorant of theatrical matters, may imagine that if actors behaved as people do in real life the play would go on prosperously and quite to the satisfaction of the audience. Those who understand acting tell us that if it were done naturally, that is without art, it would seem not only less beautiful and affecting, but even much less natural than it does now. They say that in real life (which the actor is supposed to copy) we are constantly doing things that would ensure our dismissal if we were actors; in other words, that our real life, if criticised as an imitation, would be a bad, because an inartistic imitation of reality. The bare, undeniable fact of its reality is all that makes it tolerable or acceptable; if considered as art, it would be intolerable.

So with conversations in novels. The bad novelist comes fairly near to the diffuseness, the hesitancy, the ill-constructed and commonplace language of ordinary talk; the good novelist (being an artist) abridges, concentrates, and selects only what is artistically significant. The bad novelist may really be more natural, and yet the master of the craft will give a stronger impression of nature.

Now, with regard to the representation of the figure, there are several things in art which are not justifiable as an imitation of nature, but which have their own artistic reason for existence. The most obvious is the idealisation of forms. This is not only justifiable, but much more, it is a merit and a necessity. Culture leads us to receive a suggestion from the natural form, and the artistic instinct impels us to realise, not the form itself (which exists already in reality) but that which it makes us wish for. This is the foundation of all ideal art, and a very strong foundation it is, deep in the desires of man. Here, certainly, culture leads or impels the artist towards a certain perfection that is not exactly natural, although it is suggested by nature.

The art of grouping and arranging figures in good compositions is easily overlooked, because one great object of the artist is always to make it appear as if his personages had been so arranged by a happy accident. Certainly in nature groupings do occur, especially in the free and innumerable motions of children, which often have, for an instant, the appearance of good composition; but it may be doubted whether, even in exceptional cases, a composer would accept the group from nature without correcting it. I have occasionally seen what looked like perfect natural groupings, but there is hardly ever time to examine them critically before they change, and we are always liable to substitute what Nature suggests for that which she actually presents to us. The accidental groups caught by the instantaneous photographer are usually spoiled by one or more straggling or intrusive personages, and sometimes they are ridiculous in their contradiction to the plainest artistic common sense. It would be uncandid to claim for art a general excellence in composition; few artists have the gift in its perfection, and many who are manually skilful and intellectually observant appear to be almost destitute of it. Instead of making progress in composition, the contemporary schools of Europe appear to have conceived a sort of dislike for the study as too artificial for an epoch of uncompromising naturalism. Still, after all these admissions, the fact remains that there is incomparably more composition in painting where, at least, some sort of judgment or discrimination is always exercised, than there is in nature, where everything is left to pure accident, and where a fortuitous appearance of grouping may at any time be spoiled by the most trivial human necessities or desires, or even by the intrusion of some animal, or by the awkward presence of some inanimate object.

If from composition we pass to the results of invention, we find the human creative faculty transcending nature in the most decided manner. Events happen in the natural world without more order or conclusiveness

than in the narratives of children: the genius of the novelist gives them an artificial order that satisfies our sense of proportion and our desire for a conclusion. In reality things are constantly happening to each of us which are not in any rational relation to the main tenor of our lives. Our time and powers are absurdly wasted, and our careers are made to deviate from their true course by the most irrelevant and trivial causes. The inventive novelist makes great use of irrelevant causes, but with the difference that in his compositions they are only apparently irrelevant, since he always makes them ultimately subservient to his artistic purpose. This satisfies the human desire for reasonableness in things, a desire which is never satisfied by the tangle of accidents in the course of actual events. Much of what is best in the invention of novelists escapes the uncritical reader, who nevertheless appears to appreciate the results of it, for it is only the inventive novelists who attain any eminent reputation. The superiority of art to nature is shown still more in plays when they are of first-rate excellence, as in these compositions a story has to be conveyed, without being told, through conversations which are concentrated to the utmost possible degree and yet must seem easy, natural, and unconstrained. Nothing can be further removed from the diffuse disorder of real talk than the consummate art of a first-rate French playwright, and so there is no literature more profitable to the student who can see the work done, the actual distilling of the quintessence. The operation of the inventive faculty is more obvious to the general public in musical composition, for which Nature provides nothing but unordered sounds like the whistling of the wind, the reverberation of thunder, or the indefinite murmurs of the sea. Music is pure invention. What answers to it most closely in painting is colour, which is much more the result of invention than is generally believed. Natural colour has its own beauties, but it is not colourists' colour; neither is the colour of two distinguished colourists ever the same, which is the best proof that it is not, in any narrow sense, natural. The real truth about it is that what is called "colour" in painting is personal. It is a human invention suggested by certain aspects of the natural world.

Manual execution may be said to have reference to nature because the motive for it is an endeavour to interpret natural truth; and yet so soon as manual execution is visible, as it is in all vigorous brush-work, and in all powerful pen-drawing or etching, it presents something which is absolutely non-existent in nature, though we may like to see it in art because it is interesting to see a great human power in its manifestation. What nature really is may be described in a very few words. As seen by the human eye, all natural scenes and objects present spaces of colour always gradated,

but not equally so, and various in texture but never really less finished in one part than in another. The finish is absolute, transcending the powers of the microscope. Taken at any distance, a natural object, if only in the distinctions of its tones and the delicacy of its gradations, is finished beyond human imitation and with a refinement to which all "handling" must of course be utter destruction, like rubbing the bloom from a plum. Many people who have no understanding of art are offended by work that seems to them coarse, by impasto in oil painting and by strongly bitten wiry lines in etching. Their feeling of offence shows a want of understanding of art, as a human expression, but I do not think that it betrays ignorance of nature. They seem to have perceived the refinement and finish of natural things and to have expected the same in art, not caring for human power or valuing its manifestation. On the contrary, when we understand art as something distinct from nature, we come to attach a high value to manual power and to the mental force which summarises natural appearances in a masterful way, even at the cost of considerable deviation from the truth. We come also to value personal accent very highly, and to look for it as the sign manual of genius; yet there is assuredly no such thing as accent in the natural world. It is we who accentuate, not Nature; she is indifferent, not emotional; it is we who are emotional.

Lastly, from the nature of the case, there can be no omissions in nature, but half the work of a master in fine art consists in the unrecognised yet not less real labour of omission. Here, most decidedly, Culture goes beyond Nature. When Culture omits it is in obedience to the exigencies of the idea which demands the rejection of everything at variance with itself, and even of everything useless to it.

The final result is that when Culture goes beyond Nature, as she constantly does, it is in obedience to some law, dictated by an ideal necessity, which is often obscure and often obeyed only by instinct; yet which, whenever it can be formulated or explained, is invariably found to be in accordance with the soundest and highest reason. Even the exaggerations and the partial statements of passion, which do not seem reasonable at first sight, as they are always violations of accuracy, are nevertheless seen to be reasonable when regarded from a point of view elevated enough to see them in their true relations to the universe of art where all human expression finds a place.

MAN IN ART

PART II

BEAUTY

CHAPTER I

THE IDEA OF BEAUTY

IT would have been pleasant to me, for several reasons, to speak of beauty as something positive. The self-love of a writer on art would undoubtedly be gratified if he could lay down a kind of geography of that land of the beautiful which is the especial realm of the fine arts, and it would be some consolation for the many hours that he has spent in the investigation of this most difficult and elusive subject if he could exhibit some tangible result. That, however, is a satisfaction that grows only more remote with the increase of one's experience. A young writer might naturally feel confident, because he would take the impressions received by his own idiosyncrasy for positive and objective facts. It is natural to say "this is beautiful because I see it to be so, and this is ugly because it gives no pleasure to my eyes." And when there is a difference of opinion it is natural to take dissent as an evidence of uneducated taste. When, however, the dissenter is at least as much cultivated as ourselves, our self-confidence may be a little shaken ; and when, after a lapse of time, we find our present selves disagreeing with our past selves, when we find things that were once beautiful for us now beautiful no longer, we may begin to understand the truth about beauty, which is that it is not an object but a pleasure, and like all pleasures ultimately nothing but an agreeable nervous sensation in those who feel it, whilst there is no use in attempting to explain a pleasure to those who are insensible to it. Nor is there any probability that even amongst the little groups who believe themselves to be in agreement about beauty, the sympathy is perfect enough for them to feel the same sensation in view of the same object. We have curious and quite satisfactory evidence on this point in the different interpretations of nature given by various artists, each of them seeing and insisting upon some quality to which no other artist is quite equally sensitive, whilst each of them has his own special negligences and omissions. If two artists travel

together, either they will not select the same subjects or else they will interpret them so differently that they are not the same in the interpretations. These divergences of testimony about nature are enough to make one doubt not only about beauty as an objective reality, but even about truth itself, seeing that all art is contradictory. For the present, however, it is beauty alone which concerns us.

My own belief concerning beauty, to which I have no desire to attach any dogmatic authority, is that there is no such thing in the world around us, but that we (or some of us) are so constituted that the external world, or certain things in it, may produce pleasurable sensations in us which we call the enjoyment of the beautiful. The true nature of the case may be most conveniently illustrated by sound and colour. It is well known to all who have some elementary knowledge of science that what we call colour is not in the object that we see, but is a cerebral disturbance caused by a certain number of vibrations that are somehow communicated, by a very delicate apparatus, to the brain. The invention of the telephone has made us all familiar with the complicated effects produced by the vibration of a disc, and we understand how it is that if the disc were removed, or the wire broken, the telephone would be silenced. The same effect would be produced by the destruction of our own auditory apparatus, and if it were destroyed in all creatures there would be no sound in the world. That is the correct way of stating the case, it is merely a popular error to believe that there would still be sounds, but that they would be inaudible. There are no unheard sounds and there is no unseen colour, because the vibrations external to us are neither sound nor colour in themselves, and those internal vibrations that we call sound and colour cannot be produced without the necessary living apparatus. The scientific reader will pardon me for repeating a truth that is, of course, familiar to him; perhaps he may follow with more interest the application of it to the beautiful. My belief is that the case is exactly of the same kind. What we mean by a beautiful object is an object that has the power of producing in us a sensation that we call beauty, so that if it is impotent to produce the sensation it is not called beautiful, and, indeed, it is not beautiful in reality. A very curious deduction from this is that an object, without any structural change, may be beautiful at one time, then cease to be so, and afterwards become beautiful again. The case has actually occurred in the history of antique sculpture, which was beautiful when first made, which ceased to be beautiful (that is, became impotent to produce the sensation of beauty) in the time of the Christian iconoclasts, which became beautiful again with the new Paganism of the Renascence, and has ever since continued, with some variations, to be so.

THE VENUS OF ARLES

GREEK MARBLE

HYALOGRAPH DRAWN BY G. DE ROTON

(*Louvre*)

THE great beauty of this head induced me to give it more importance than would have been possible if the whole body had been represented, besides which there is but a small restoration in the head (the end of the nose); whereas in the body the restorations are too important, for they include the whole of the right arm and the left fore-arm. The head was found first in the theatre of Arles, at the foot of the columns that are still standing, in the year 1651, and the body later. The restorations were made in 1684 by François Girardon. As for the date of the statue itself, nothing is accurately known. We only know that it is Greek, and of a good school.

Even in the present day, however, antique sculpture is beautiful only for a few. The proof that it is not beautiful for the multitude is that the magnificent halls where it is exhibited in Paris and elsewhere are deserted, though surrounded by teeming populations. In like manner the art of engraving, the severe and genuine art of engraving with firm clear lines and neither texture nor local colour, is one of the most perfectly beautiful arts for a few students, but the public does not find it beautiful, that is, the people know that it is impotent to give them that pleasure which is called the enjoyment of the beautiful.

The reader who has followed me so far may now be tempted to say that we know certain things to be beautiful in themselves by the authority of great men. I regret my inability to accept authority in these matters, but there is at least the compensation that I never attempt to impose it. My reason for rejecting authority is that nobody can argue about the sensitiveness of another person's nervous system, and it is upon this sensitiveness, whether natural or acquired by culture, that the sensation of the beautiful depends. We have it on the authority of Raphael (which if there were authority at all would surely be a high one) that Gothic architecture is not beautiful. I have no doubt that Raphael was quite right, if we understand his statement to mean that Gothic architecture failed to produce the sensation of the beautiful in him; and also that he was entirely mistaken if he considered it unable to produce that sensation in all others, or that if they felt such a sensation it would be a proof of their own incompetence. At the same time, if nobody had the peculiar kind of nervous sensitiveness that is affected by Gothic architecture, then Raphael would be absolutely right; and if ever the time shall come when all men will agree with Raphael, in that day Gothic architecture will really have ceased to be beautiful. It will be like a poem in a forgotten tongue that has lost all the powers of poetry, having become unable to arouse poetical emotion in any human mind.

What is called the beauty of poetry will be found, on analysis, to consist not only in the choice of language and the music of poetic numbers, but also in its power of recalling various pleasures to the imagination. All those passages of poetry which refer to the pleasures of love are unmeaning for readers who are incapable of sexual attachment. Even the poetical celebration of minor pleasures, such as those of sailing and the chase, is not beautiful for those who do not enjoy boating or the saddle. If the whole world embraced the doctrine of total abstinence there would no longer be anything but metrical beauty in the numerous poems that have been written in praise of wine. It would then be said that the poetical

writers of former times had a depraved taste for an injurious beverage, and their praises of it would be attributed rather to a strange kind of insanity, making them lower than the brutes, than to the love of a joyous ideal.

If the doctrine that beauty is an emotion in ourselves appears difficult to the reader, he may consider those cases where there does not seem to be any physical impediment, yet where the emotion that we call beauty is not produced. We have all known people whose hearing was excellent in the sense that they could hear sounds well at a distance, yet to whom that which we call "music" was only an unmeaning noise. In these cases beauty is not perceived, and indeed although the hearer's tympanum duly vibrates he does not hear *music* any more than if he were stone-deaf. It appears that men belonging to races that live quite apart from European civilisation are in the same case; our music does not affect them—it seems to them only noise. Now, if we can imagine a Beethoven, himself being deaf, making compositions in a world exclusively inhabited by such people, the performance of those compositions would not produce music, because that effect upon us of certain ordered noises which we call "music" is a purely personal emotion. As there is no sound without a nervous system, so there is no music without that peculiar nervous delicacy which predisposes to the emotion of the beautiful. It may also be easily proved that there can be no melody without memory in the hearer, as the sounds are successive *and depend for their melodious effect on his recollection of those which have gone before.* Without memory he would hear a note and then another note substituted for it, and he would probably not even be aware of the substitution.

Beyond this, our notion of beauty is dependent on a certain average delicacy of our senses themselves. They must not be too dull, and they must not be too acute. The beauty of a lady's skin depends, for us, on the average acuteness of our sight. With what is called bad sight we should not perceive it, and to sight of more than human acuteness the skin would present the unattractive appearance that it does when seen through a microscope. Even taking human organs as they are, it is probable that the best beauty of landscape, its synthetic beauty, is rarely felt by persons of excessively acute vision because they see it too much in detail. An average acuteness of sense is not less necessary for the enjoyment of music. A lady who had formerly a keen appreciation of music, but who has become partially deaf, tells me that, as she misses most of the *pianos* and all the *pianissimos*, music has now lost a great part of its meaning for her. On the other hand, if we heard music as through a

microphone, the emotional significance of the softer passages would be lost to us. It is one of the misfortunes of the partially deaf, that although they can still hear words uttered in what others call a loud voice, human speech is not beautiful for them, because they cannot hear modulated speaking, and the beauty of speech depends entirely on modulation.

This view of beauty as an emotion in ourselves may at once explain and excuse the language of those who see nothing in what we most admire. If they deny the presence of beauty, their only error is in the use of a popular form of language. Translated into a more unassailable form it would amount only to this, that a certain object, or a certain performance, has not the power to awaken in the speaker the delightful emotions of the beautiful, a statement that is likely to be true. Even the most philosophical of critics is obliged to use popular language for his own and his reader's convenience. He cannot go on repeating that an object does, or does not, awaken in himself the emotion of the beautiful; he will say, like other people, that the object is, or is not, beautiful in itself. The convenience of popular language is all the greater that it saves us from the necessity of explaining an emotion which is in reality inexplicable. I may describe the emotion of the beautiful (speaking from my own experience, which in such a matter is absolutely all I have to go upon) as a kind of satisfaction, the satisfaction of the æsthetic desire, and differing from other satisfactions (such as the desire for utility); and I might add that the satisfaction is not active but receptive, at least we seem to receive an impression that causes the emotion of the beautiful, yet even this requires some cerebral activity in us. Beyond this, the whole subject is a mystery, and what may be the exact concordance of cerebral movements in which the emotion itself consists no human being knows, or has ever known.

The preceding considerations may seem to point to the conclusion that beauty is illusory. On the contrary, as our sensations are all we know, and beauty is a sensation, it has its place amongst the firmest realities of existence. The pleasure which is called the enjoyment of the beautiful has the great advantage that it need not be mixed up with any deception regarding matters of fact. When we say that a picture or a poem is beautiful we mean simply that it has given us the sensation of beauty, and we accept it on that ground; we do not say or mean that the picture is true as a representation, or the poem accurate as a narrative. The search for beauty is therefore never misleading if that special pleasure is exclusively kept in view, and amongst human pursuits it is one of the least vain. There are few satisfactions that tend so constantly to happiness, that can be

renewed so frequently by the same object, or that last better as we approach old age.

The lovers of beauty have often incurred the reproach of selfishness because that which they seek is an enjoyment, and natures which are so constituted as to be incapable of that pleasure frequently despise it as an effeminate self-indulgence. The delight in beauty is so far selfish that we have it within ourselves; but it is absolutely unselfish in this, that we never desire to be alone in having it. In this it is strikingly distinguished from some other passions, such as those of rarity and rank. There is a clear distinction between the love of beauty and the satisfaction in having a bigger diamond than any one else. I myself have never known a lover of beauty who did not desire that houses should be externally beautiful, so that all might enjoy them, or who did not feel pained by the destruction of beauty in the country and by the exclusion of the public from beautiful walks that belonged to churlish landowners. I have never known a lover of beauty who did not profoundly regret that so many lives should be deprived of it; and some good men, like Mr. T. C. Horsfall, have felt that their own access to the sources of beauty was accompanied by feelings of compunction unless they gave work and money in order that their poorer brethren might have access to them also. That "golden gate of the Beautiful," which a German poet has declared to be the entrance to the land of wisdom, may be the entrance also to a land of loving-kindness.

APHRODITE

A Bronze Mask

Hyalograph drawn by T. E. Macklin

(*British Museum*)

It is not quite certain that this is intended for Aphrodite.

The mask is from Satala in Cappadocia. It is given here as a fine example of the classical profile, the head of the Venus of Arles not having been given in profile. It is also a good example of the simple and beautiful antique way of dressing the hair which was so suitable for plastic representation.

ΑΦΡΟΔΙΤΗ

IMP. CHARDON-WITTMANN PARIS

T. EYRE-MACKLIN.

CHAPTER II

BEAUTY AND INTEREST

ALL artists are, I believe, agreed upon elementary principles of beauty as exhibited in very simple forms, but in all these cases, without exception, I find that in their opinion the more interesting of two simple forms is sure to be reckoned the more beautiful, and this leads me to the conclusion either that beauty and interest are not clearly separated in the human mind, or else that they are in some degree convertible terms. This is, however, applicable only to forms which are destitute of intellectual or sympathetic interest—or, in other words, of mind and feeling; for whenever this human interest exists in a picture, even of the inferior kind which is destitute of story or incident, it becomes at once predominant enough to hold its own without beauty, and is not confounded with beauty. There is a remarkable instance of this in a picture in the Louvre by Domenico Ghirlandajo, representing an old man whose face is spoiled by an enlarged nose; but he is looking down affectionately to a little boy, and the child is looking up affectionately to him, so that the picture is interesting for its human sympathy, and is plainly intended as an illustration of that marvellous power of love by which it overcomes our natural repugnance to ugliness. In this case, however, it might be maintained that there is beauty of a higher kind, that of feeling, and that the physical beauty of the picture is knowingly sacrificed to this, yet not wholly sacrificed either, as the face of the boy is beautiful.

To return, however, to our simple elementary forms for whatever instruction they may afford.

The most elementary question is that concerning the relative beauty of the square and the oblong. The oblong is not what any one would call a beautiful shape, but it is considered more beautiful than the square—that is to say, it is more pleasing, in some way, to the eye. If we compare the two we shall find that they have all characteristics in common except

one. All the angles in both cases are right angles, the opposite lines are parallel, and both figures are equally destitute of curvature. The only difference is that in the square the four lines are of equal length, whilst they are of two different lengths in the oblong. The consequence is that the oblong is the more interesting because the less uniform of the two figures; and from this it would appear either that there is some confusion in our ideas about interest and beauty, or else that interest is really in itself an element of beauty. Amongst figures with curved outlines there is a similar comparison between the circle and the ellipse. The circle is even a more uniform figure than the square, because the square has sides and angles, whilst the circle is destitute of angles. However, as curved lines are considered more beautiful than straight ones, and are in themselves more interesting, the circle is held to be more beautiful than the square. A square sun or moon would not be an ornament, except by effulgence, in the sky. The ellipse is considered more beautiful than the circle, because it has some variety of dimension and of curvature, also in being longer than it is broad, and having differences of comparative roundness in the outline. The gallop of the horses in an elliptic hippodrome is felt by all spectators to be more interesting and more beautiful than the monotonous round of a common circus. Even, however, amongst very simple figures there is one that is more interesting than the ellipse, and that is the oval or egg-outline. In this the interest is enhanced by the bigness and roundness of one of the ends, and the comparative sharpness and smallness of the other, producing great changes in intensity of curve.

These comparisons are already familiar; but as I find it is impossible to make any recapitulation of known things without incurring the accusation of the "commonplace," I hasten to add that nobody seems to have disengaged beauty from interest in these elementary figures, the more interesting being always called the more beautiful. This holds good also when we come to the question of relief. Ornament of a cheap kind may be sawn out of any board, and this kind of ornament is used freely for unpretending decoration, such as that of a Swiss chalet. When, however, we come to decoration of a higher kind, it is felt that the flatness of the sawn-out ornament is in itself a lack of beauty, as such ornament has nothing but outline to recommend it. Nobody could call it ugly if the linear design were good, but there is a negative kind of fault in it, which is the absence of relief. Now, in all kinds of carved ornament that are employed upon edifices of some importance there is invariably some degree of relief, from the bas-relief, in which the forms of nature are all considerably but never entirely flattened, to the statues that stand out from the

PORTRAITS OF AN OLD MAN AND A CHILD

PAINTED BY DOMENICO GHIRLANDAJO

ETCHED BY HENRI MANESSE

(*Louvre*)

SELECTED as evidence that the beauty of the person represented is not absolutely necessary to the charm of a picture.

Here the beauty of the old gentleman has been entirely spoiled, if he ever had any.

The picture interests us by the charm of affectionate expression. The persons must be a grandfather and little grandson. The old man loves sadly and tenderly, the child with all his young heart. The subject might be called "Love triumphing over Ugliness."

I was glad to include this pleasing example of childhood and old age from the art of the fifteenth century.

In the etching (or engraving, for there is a good deal of engraver's work also) M. Manesse has purposely followed simple, early principles of work. There is very little cross-hatching, and what there is, is of the most elementary kind.

Ghirlandajo pinx

Imp Wittmann Rome

H Manesse sc

background, as the figures did in the pediment of the Parthenon. Evidently, then, relief is felt to be an element of beauty, but here again we find an increase of interest at the same time in the presence of a third dimension, which is also very various in degree, there being much more relief in some places than in others.

So far beauty and interest go together. If now we add colour to the work, there is a new beauty and at the same time a new interest, and so it is with the addition of varieties of quality and texture in substances. In the new cathedral at Marseilles, the architect Vaudoyer enhanced the interest of his work by a variety of materials, and this is certainly felt to be at the same time an increase in the pleasure of the eye. There are more than six hundred columns, of rose-coloured granite, of gray granite from the Lago Maggiore, of *marbre griotte*, of green marble from Corsica, of Alpine marble, and Levanto. The arches are built alternately of hard stone from Cassis and red marble from the Var. It might be argued that the mere variety of interest is not in itself enough for beauty, and that the edifice might have been spoiled by the injudicious employment of the same materials. I have not ventured further than the assertion that beauty and variety increase together in very simple forms. Beyond these they may possibly go together, as in the cathedral at Marseilles, or you may have an increase of interest at the expense of beauty, as when chapels in discordant styles are built round a simple edifice. The interest of Westminster Abbey is enhanced by its collection of monuments, but it would gain in beauty by their removal.

CHAPTER III

BEAUTY AND UNITY

BEAUTY is a very difficult study in natural subjects, such as landscape and the human figure, on account of the variety and complexity of the material in the first, and the subtlety and refinement of form, continually modified by motion, in the second. The best introduction to the study of beauty is the investigation of it in some kind of artificial construction, such as architecture; and for my part I have learned many useful lessons from the study of ships and boats. As beauty is entirely a personal sensation, I was obliged to refer always to my own feelings, having no hope of finding any laws of beauty independent of human feeling, and being, as we all are, incapable of imagining how anything could be beautiful in itself if it was not beautiful for me. My method of investigation, an extremely simple one, was as follows. Comparing a large number of accurate representations of ships and boats, as well as the things themselves, whenever accessible, I found that the range of beauty and ugliness in them was very wide, that each vessel invariably had qualities of some kind with reference to beauty, and was sure to be, in a greater or less degree, either pleasing or offensive to my taste. If it pleased me, the next question was "Why?" and I invariably found to my great satisfaction *that there was a reason which could be formulated.* To come without further preamble to the special subject of this chapter, I found, for example, that every ship or boat that pleased me was sure to have the quality of unity. Some vessels, good for practical purposes, have no æsthetic unity, but I never found them satisfactory to the eye. Suppose a vessel has two masts, like a schooner, with fore and aft sails. If the foresail and mainsail are exactly of the same size and pattern, the effect will not be satisfactory, because there will be no subordination. If, however, the mainsail is larger, there is already a beginning of satisfaction; and if it is so placed and so cut as to carry on the lines of the foresail to a greater

height, with little of a break, the desire for unity will be still further gratified. Finally, if *all* the sails, including jibs and topsails, are so designed that when the vessel spreads all her canvas it will be bounded by a few simple and coherent lines, the gratification as to this quality will be complete.

The same law prevails with regard to all ships and boats, whatever the number of their masts and sails. If a line is begun by a sail forward it requires to be continued by those which are further aft; for example, the upper line of the jib requires to be carried on by the gaff of the foresail, and this again by the main gaff. If these gaffs, instead of an effect of continuity, produced a general outline like the teeth of a saw, the effect would be displeasing from the lack of unity. In a three-masted ship the whole arrangement of the masts and sails is subordinated to one dominant curve.

The application of this law to mankind is more obvious in groups than in single figures, but even in the single figure it has great importance as a regulation of attitude. The most direct violations of it, and therefore the most instructive as examples, are the attitudes assumed in naval and military signalling, attitudes unnatural in their stiffness, in which the arms are used separately or simultaneously, like the boards in the semaphore telegraph. Here the attitude has neither the unity of art nor that of accident. The human frame is simplified till it has become a machine in three pieces, a post with two movable arms, and the arms are never foreshortened. In the attitudes of the signalman we have an excessive simplicity, but without unity. Now let us pass to an attitude such as an artist likes, that of the female model in Mr. Alma Tadema's study in this volume. It is felt at once to be beautiful, and see how complete is the unity, the body bending, the limbs joined, the face attentive, and all for one purpose, which may be trivial as an action, but is admirably chosen as a motive.

The necessity for considering unity is even more strongly felt in groups, and its presence or absence is one of the most marked distinctions between primitive and accomplished art. For example, the illustrations in this volume which show least of it are those from works by Fra Angelico and Borgognone. It is true that they are only compartments in larger compositions, but even if we take this into consideration, there is still very little unity. The attitude of a figure is considered in itself without reference to other figures near it. In Angelico's picture the blacks and whites come anyhow, all over it. There is, however, in the complete composition a dawning sense of artistic unity in one respect; splendour of

colour is kept chiefly for the central compartment, where Christ is, and black is at first sparingly introduced on each side, whilst it becomes common only at a distance from the effulgent source of glory. In the set of family portraits by Borgognone, originally part of a silken standard, there is no artistic unity whatever; the profiles are in their places by a sort of accident, and that not a happy accident, and one of them seems to have been inserted as an afterthought. The hand, too, so singularly introduced in the corner, is without any artistic connection with the rest. Even here, however, there is at least a moral unity, since, as in the picture by Angelico, all the personages are joined in a common act of devotion.

If from these primitive attempts we turn to the work of a thorough artist, Sir John Gilbert, we are always sure of unity. Observe, in the picture of "The Bishop," the complete subordination of one of the two figures to the other, the answering lines of the composition rhyming in the crozier and the book, the alb and the chasuble, and both culminating in the mitre. Even the heavy carving in the front of the episcopal throne is echoed by a bracket above. Nor is the unity of employment less complete in this instance than in the two we have just considered, for both figures are working together, in their several ways, in the ordered service of their Church.

The beauty that is connected with unity, or the sense of satisfaction hardly distinguishable from beauty, may be understood by a careful study of the Dutch masters, whose personages are very rarely beautiful in themselves, and yet the pictures which represent them satisfy us almost in the same way as beauty itself does. "The Cradle" by Maes, the "Old Woman" by Schalcken, in the National Gallery, are both good examples of that completeness of satisfaction which we gain from perfect unity. In each of these pictures the unity is as absolute as it is in Sir John Gilbert's work. The little girl is minding the baby in the cradle, the woman is busy with her pans: there is nothing to disturb their attention or to distract ours. It is true that Schalcken indulged himself with a butterfly, probably just at the last in a moment of relief when the work was done, but the busy housewife has something else to do than admire the pretty colours of its wings.

WOMAN SCOURING A PAN

PAINTED BY GODFRIED SCHALCKEN

ETCHED BY C. O. MURRAY

(*National Gallery*)

THIS picture is an instance of the way in which the painters of the seventeenth century in Holland made excellent art out of the commonest life around them. No incident could be more ordinary than this, and the woman is in her working dress, yet, in reality, the picture combines all the qualities of a portrait with those of a study of still life. The oppositions of light and dark adapt it well to this kind of etching, which has given almost everything except colour.

The catalogue of the National Gallery calls the plate simply "An Old Woman." That title does not seem to me sufficiently explanatory, and besides, the woman is not so *very* old, she is only about fifty, an age that seems almost youthful to people of sixty or seventy, and is indeed only the autumn, and not yet the winter of life. Probably the industrious Dutchwoman lived to scour many a pan after this one.

CHAPTER IV

BEAUTY AND CUSTOM

CUSTOM appears to affect our impressions of beauty chiefly on the favourable side, for those persons who have what is called a feeling for the beautiful affirm that the frequency with which an object is seen does not make it appear less beautiful to them, whilst they gain a sort of tolerance or even indifference to ugly things if they see them every day, and have no power to remove them. The inhabitants of cities become insensitive to ugliness in their own cities, but they seem to regain their sensitiveness when they visit another place. A Londoner told me that he did not perceive the ugly houses in London, as he never looked at them, but on his rare visits to Manchester he was painfully shocked by what seemed to him the obtrusive hideousness of the town and the foulness of its atmosphere. He appears to have received exactly the same impression from the capital of the cotton-trade that a Parisian receives from London. The Parisian himself is not more remarkable for his pride in the beauty of Paris than for the extreme facility with which he overlooks the many things that are not beautiful there, and the many other things that are uninteresting and monotonous.

The favouring influence of custom is seen in the rapidity of our reconciliation to fashions that seemed at first outrageous and extravagant. In a short time we take no notice of them, and reserve our astonishment for their successors. After a very few years, fashions that have become obsolete seem so ridiculous that our past toleration of them is incredible. It is true that the tolerance men have for what is customary, and their intolerance of the unusual, are not directly connected with the beautiful, yet they are so indirectly, for the delight in beauty is always a serious feeling, often even a melancholy one, and therefore it is incompatible with a spirit of mockery and derision. The tendency of shallow people to laugh at everything in foreign countries which is externally different from what they

are accustomed to see at home was one of the chief reasons for the repugnance with which English painting was so long regarded by French critics. They complained of its essentially English character, quite forgetting that French painting is not less essentially French, and that the representation of some Homeric or Biblical scene by a western European is as likely to be tinged with his own nationality if he lives on one side of the Channel as on the other. The same difficulty about national usage is a great impediment to our enjoyment of foreign literature. The strange idioms appear absurd until we have got so completely accustomed to them that the absurdity has disappeared; but so long as our knowledge of the language is imperfect, the absurdity of the idiom makes it impossible for us to attune our minds to beauty which, as I have said, is always a *serious* pleasure.

This is probably a reason why the nude in art is associated by artists themselves with seriousness in the pursuit of beauty. They feel that the nude is more completely disengaged from custom than clothing can ever be. Next to the nude, the dresses least likely to incur that kind of criticism which prevents the enjoyment of beauty are those which change least, such as sacerdotal vestments, or which disarm criticism by an extreme simplicity. The costume of Sisters of Charity, and that which used to be worn by Quakeresses, are not unfavourable to the effect of a pretty face, though they were never designed for the enhancement of feminine charms.

The famous opening of "Endymion" contains two assertions about "a thing of beauty," that it gives perennial pleasure, and that the loveliness of it increases. If the reader will refer to his own experience, he will probably find that the pleasure given by anything truly beautiful is inexhaustible, yet that its nature changes. We are constantly making discoveries of new beauty in scenes, and even in persons that seemed to us perfectly beautiful at first. The early impression is modified, but unless our sense of beauty is very weak and very liable to become *blasé*, subsequent impressions will give equal pleasure, though of another kind. The difference is that there is less excitement than at first. There is nothing in human experience like the first sight of the ocean or the Alps, and yet the painter who studies either of them for years finds that the beauty of them constantly increases for him with the growing delicacy of his perceptions. There is also a growing beauty in scenery which is often at first condemned as dull and uninteresting, but which, like shy and retiring persons, allows us slowly and gradually to discover qualities that we never suspected. The Saône appeared to me at one time a dull river, yet after a few voyages I began to perceive a world of beauty in its broad and open waters and its infinite

distances. Even the desert became beautiful to Fromentin, and its beauty seemed incomparable with any other.

There is one very curious effect of custom which closely concerns the special subject of this volume, and that is the power of fashion or present custom in opinion which makes people really and unaffectedly admire what they never would have admired unless they had been so directed. In Madame Récamier's lifetime it was the fashion to look upon her as a supremely beautiful woman. Several portraits of her have come down to us, notably the important one by David, and they fail to produce that strong impression upon us, because our ideals have changed with the change of fashion. Even a change of taste in head-dresses is enough to affect our judgment. There is the famous portrait of Lucrezia Crivelli, by Lionardo, commonly called "La Belle Ferronnière." I am old enough to remember a time when Lucrezia's style in dressing the hair would have been considered absolutely right—modest, tasteful, unimpeachable in all ways. To our present taste it is inartistic. The hair is all plastered flat without any natural grace, the outline of it cuts sharply against the forehead and comes to the corners of the eyes, whilst the ears are completely hidden. Certainly our changed taste about hair-dressing must interfere, in this instance, with our judgment of beauty. The hair of the Venus of Arles happily does not offend us in any way, and being in marble it escapes even that fashion about colour which at one time requires hair to be dark and at another golden.

CHAPTER V

BEAUTY AND SUMPTUOUSNESS

THOUGH these two qualities of things are very frequently confounded together, especially by the vulgar, it is plain that there must be a distinction, seeing that the pleasure given by beauty is perennial, whilst that derived from sumptuousness is soon exhausted by familiarity. Indeed, it is questionable whether sumptuousness can be said to give any real pleasure except by the gratification which it affords to the pride of those wealthy enough to display it, and even to them it is often wearisome, especially when they have cultivated minds.

The reader may remember a passage in *Jane Eyre* which is a powerful expression of the effect of experience in altering our estimate of splendour. It is in the conversation between Rochester and Jane Eyre after Mr. Mason's departure from Thornfield.

"Come where there is some freshness, for a few moments," he said; "that house is a mere dungeon; don't you feel it so?"

"It seems to me a splendid mansion, sir."

"The glamour of inexperience is over your eyes," he answered, "and you see it through a charmed medium; you cannot discern that the gilding is slime and the silk draperies cobwebs; that the marble is sordid slate, and the polished woods mere refuse chips and scaly bark. Now *here* (he pointed to the leafy enclosure we had entered) all is real, sweet, and pure."

The effect of habit in robbing sumptuousness of its power over the mind was once expressed to me by a Parisian in this way. He said: "The splendour of palaces no longer imposes on the Parisian mind; partly, perhaps, because we have easy access to splendid rooms in the Louvre and at Versailles, but mainly because our cafés are often gorgeous, and have accustomed us to an abundance of gilding and other costly ornaments, so that now we pay hardly any attention to this sort of magnificence."

The effect of experience in the life of nations diminishes the power of

splendour in the same way. Queen Elizabeth was habitually gorgeous, as Henry VIII. had been before her. In those days it was a part of kingcraft to study the effect of pomp on the minds of subjects. Queen Victoria is habitually simple, and only resumes a little pomp of ancient royalty on the rarest occasions. The loss of power in that sort of display has been rapid even in our time. We have seen the old state coach in actual use, and we have seen it pass into the condition of a curiosity. In France the Prefects have an official costume with silver embroidery, but that is a survival; the President of the Republic, whose office, though of far greater importance, is of more recent institution than theirs, has neither any official costume nor the courage to invent one. Even in the slowly changing East the use of splendour by rulers has remarkably diminished. The modern Shah displayed many diamonds on his first visit to Europe; on his second visit he did not glitter much; and now, for the glorious Oriental Shah who once dazzled our imaginations, we must go back to the pages of Malcolm.

It has already been found convenient to refer to the beauty of ships. If they are often good examples of beauty and unity in design, they are not less valuable examples of the decline and disappearance of sumptuousness. It might have been supposed that with the increase of public wealth those vessels, at least, which are used for pleasure would have been more gorgeous than ever, instead of which all change has been in the direction of simplicity. The high poop covered with carving and gilding, the sails of many colours, the enormous emblazoned flags, have disappeared from the seas like the clouds of a long past sunset; but future sunsets may be splendid still, whilst it is not likely that the future will renew the glories of a vanished fleet.

The most interesting and instructive of all examples of sumptuousness and art joined together is the chryselephantine statue. In the Pallas of the Parthenon and the Jupiter of Olympia, Phidias united the utmost richness of material with the most consummate art. This case is a very different one from the decoration of some semi-barbarian vessel like the *Henri Grâce de Dieu*. The disappearance of the ship is but the loss of a curiosity, the destruction of the statue is a calamity for mankind, and will be a subject of regret to all intelligent persons down to the remotest ages. The materials of the chryselephantine statues were chiefly ivory for the flesh and gold for the drapery, but other precious things were also employed, especially jewels for the eyes. This sumptuousness of materials may appear to us a little barbarous, and the desire for it may, indeed, have come down to Phidias from barbarous ages, when idols were costly and magnificent rather than beautiful; but with the single exception of the jewelled eyes there are good

artistic reasons in favour of his materials. He probably enjoyed both the texture and the colour of the ivory statue with its drapery of pure gold. The chryselephantine combination does, in fact, offer both a contrast of substances and a harmony of colour. Our own experience of it is confined to statuettes; even from these, however, we may see that the Greeks were right, and that the mellow tones and rich harmony of the ivory and gold, with their incomparable textures, offer a beauty excelling that of marble. The case here is a complicated one. The permanent interest of the work lay in its quality as fine art, and was connected with the material only just so far as the material itself was conducive to an artistic result. The costliness of the material may not affect a philosopher, but it impresses the people, and so has a religious use, like the costliness of the malachite and lapis lazuli pillars in the cathedral of St. Isaac, at St. Petersburg, said to be worth twelve thousand pounds a pair. The comparison may be carried further, since the ivory and gold used by Phidias were merely external, being built upon a cheap framework, whilst the Russian columns are really tubes of cast-iron with a precious blue or green veneer.[1]

The truly barbaric practice is to employ a material that is artistically inferior because it happens to be expensive. Silver is sometimes employed in this way for statues, and more frequently for statuettes. It is a bad material for the purpose, the lights upon it being cold and shiny, and the metal tarnishes in its hollows, as in the folds of drapery. Bronze is much superior to silver, and clay to bronze, except that it is more fragile. An example of foolish sumptuousness is the printing of etchings upon satin, which is far inferior to paper as a material for such a purpose, the gloss of it, which may please children, being an impediment to sight, like the glitter of a copper-plate before a proof is taken. The rule of art in these cases, as in most others, is simply a kind of common-sense, disdainful of reasons extraneous to its own purposes. In this way a sailor might like gold or, still better, platinum for his ballast and silk for his sails, not because these materials are costly, but because platinum is the heaviest metal, and silk the strongest tissue; and an engineer would reject aluminium for bridge-building even if nature supplied it more abundantly than iron.

The higher the intellectual interest of any work, the more it ought to be separated from sumptuousness. I may be accused of inconsistency in declaring this in what booksellers would call a sumptuous volume, yet there is nothing in this book beyond what is necessary for the illustrations. A gorgeous binding has a forbidding aspect for a reader. The proper use of such a binding is to be exhibited under glass. Plain and light bindings

[1] Atkinson, *An Art Tour in Northern Capitals*. Macmillan, 1873.

are suitable for those books that are our friends, and strong ones for books of reference.

It rarely happens that sumptuousness is united to beauty of form. The most gorgeous costumes worn by historical personages have usually been highly artificial disguises, concealing the human form effectually without having much of their own as a compensation. Gorgeous ecclesiastical vestments hide the body as a bell hides its clapper, and they fit it almost as loosely. The effect of gorgeous accoutrements, in any case, is to divert attention from the man to his habiliments; and whatever may be the ornament, it is sure to contradict the natural outline. What are epaulettes —I mean the heavy old-fashioned epaulettes with bullion fringe? They are glittering excrescences interfering with the natural outline of the shoulders. To get rid of them is an advance from sumptuousness towards form. So, in the accoutrements of horses, it is always the most barbarous nations that disguise form under showy trappings; the simple English saddle and bridle, which have served as models to Europe, leave the shape of the animal almost entirely visible, and are in themselves neither sumptuous in material and decoration nor obtrusive in colour, whilst the outlines of them are a few well-designed curves.

The jay once adorned itself with peacock's feathers, and the ass with the lion's skin, but that was in the world of fable. In the world of reality, man is the only animal that despoils other creatures for his own adornment, with a result that is imposing or ludicrous according to the mental predisposition of the spectators. Sumptuous costumes succeed only in an age of veneration; our own age has become too positive for them. It only inherits them as relics of a past magnificence, and whilst it inherits it curtails. It cannot invent, being paralysed by its fear of ridicule.

Note.—Since this chapter was written I incline to the belief, now becoming prevalent, that the ivory in the chryselephantine statues was painted flesh-colour as it has been in a recent practical experiment by Gérôme, but this does not affect the argument about sumptuousness, as the costliness of the statues would not be diminished but even a little increased by the addition of painting. The eyes of the faithful would lose, however, the delightful harmony of ivory and gold, and perhaps the colouring may not have been an adequate compensation.

CHAPTER VI

THE ANALOGIES OF BEAUTY

THE position taken in the preceding chapter may be defended in some degree by taking certain analogies into account, both in connection with tastes that are usually ranked much below the enjoyment of beauty in the fine arts, and also in connection with other desires and enjoyments that are exalted equally far above it. I will consider the lower tastes first, as they always have precedence in the history of mankind.

As to that kind of taste, then, which is a pleasure or a suffering caused by some sort of motion in the nerves of the inside of the mouth, and especially, if not exclusively, in the tongue, the enjoyment that it gives has a sufficiently close analogy with that of beauty for the term "beautiful" to be sometimes applied to it. When Sir Walter Scott said that lambs were beautiful, and his wife, thinking of the table, answered that they were "beautiful, boiled," the idea of beauty was extended from the pictorial view of nature to the gastronomical. Scientific men, such as Mr. Lewes, observe an analogy between tastes and colours which brings gastronomy very near to the ocular enjoyment of colour ; indeed, effects of contrast and harmony may be studied both in gastronomy and painting. In gastronomy there is effect by succession, as in melody, and also effect by combination, as in musical harmony. Gastronomy, like music and odours, has also unquestionably an effect upon the imagination.

What concerns me here in gastronomy is that the quality which may, I think, fairly and correctly be called beauty in flavours is a personal sensation only. We have no evidence whatever that the same dish produces the same taste in any two persons, but we have excellent evidence that it must often produce different tastes. There is the flavour of oysters, for example, which to some is exquisitely delicate, to others indescribably nauseous. I am of the former persuasion, and have often tried to discover what those who feel disgust at oysters experience from their contact with

TASTE

PAINTED BY GONZALES COQUES

ETCHED BY G. W. RHEAD

(*National Gallery*)

THIS is one of the few illustrations in the present volume that have been chosen for expression chiefly.

The expression here is that of a temporary exhilaration of the spirits by the enjoyment of good oysters and good wine. The intellectual and ascetic reader may be entirely above these lower pleasures and so despise them, but why be hard on this sensualist of another age? He eats no more oysters, and it is two hundred years since the vintage has had any interest for him. On canvas he lives indeed by the vivacity of his looks.

the tongue, but all I can ascertain is that their sensations must be totally different from mine. Now, how otiose would be a discussion between us on the "beauty" of that flavour! The flavour is a sensation in the nervous system, evidently not the same in the two cases, though produced by similar objects. We are still more liable to mistake when two of us appreciate the same thing. Two lovers of oysters believe that they have the same taste, yet there is no evidence that they experience the same sensations. All we really know is that oysters produce agreeable sensations in both; but as the variety of agreeable sensations is infinite, we have no means of ascertaining that in the two cases they are identical.

Gastronomical taste resembles ocular pleasure in its capability, within limits, of education. I remember offering a bottle of excellent Burgundy to a foreigner, and he asked me if that was "the sour wine of the country"? His impression of sourness (and he perceived no other quality) was due, I believe, to his want of practice in distinguishing wines, as no one living in Burgundy could have received it from a wine of that vintage. In this case it might, however, be maintained that the foreigner came with a fresh palate, and was therefore more impressionable by sourness than a Burgundian. To this the Burgundian would reply that the accusation of sourness was a mistake, as such wine in that condition has not any sourness whatever. The final settlement of the question is, in its nature, impossible, because education has a double effect—it makes us more sensitive to some things, and at the same time, by the influence of habit, it deadens our sensibility to others.

The variety of opinion about odours is good proof that the nervous systems of different individuals are not affected in the same way. The feelings awakened by perfumes are perhaps even more closely analogous to beauty than the most exquisite flavours; perfumes are certainly more employed by the poets. I cannot remember a single instance of an allusion to the taste of oysters in poetry, and if a poet were to sing their praises he would excuse himself by assuming a facetious tone. All kinds of pleasant odours are freely introduced by the poets, even when unfamiliar to the reader, like the "champak odours" of Shelley, that the English reader takes on trust as something pleasant and poetical. The faculty of smell is indeed a sort of taste that seems, as it were, spiritualised and etherealised, because we cannot see the minute and widely disseminated particles of matter that affect the olfactory nerves. Yet it is unquestionable that these particles of matter exist, and it is equally unquestionable that the same particles produce both good and bad smells in different organisations. One of my friends has an extreme dislike to the odour of the rose, to another

even the faintest trace of musk is an abomination, a third is unpleasantly oppressed with incense. When we pass from one kind of animal to another the difference of effect is still greater. There are waters that seem perfectly sweet to human beings, and are clear as crystal, yet any horse will sniff at them and refuse them. Sometimes the objection is on the human side. The smell of the mouse is to me both strong and offensive, but my cat, whose senses are probably more delicate than mine, must perceive quite a different odour. I wonder what smell my dog perceives when he has rolled himself on carrion! His sense is of a delicacy inconceivable by me, yet he has no more objection to carrion than I have to a clean shirt, and my human dislike to it only puzzles him. Perhaps it is a delicate perfume in his nostrils, or, it may be, simply refreshing. For him, unquestionably, it produces an effect analogous to that of beauty; for me it is hideousness unseen.

If now we pass to a region where our poor animal friends are unable to follow us, the region of morals, we find the most opposite effects produced by the same actions. All morality of a kind elevated enough to make a man act against his own interest appears silly to a man of the world. The impression which the man of the world receives from acts of self-denial in obedience to principle is like seeing a man burn a banknote. Such acts are not beautiful for him, they are ridiculous, and so soon as they involve, as they usually do, some sacrifice of family interests, they are not only ridiculous but wrong. One of the most striking contrasts in moral appreciations is to be found in the opposite estimates of the virtue or vice of hypocrisy, whichever it may be. A few moralists detest it alike in theory and practice, and no doubt it may be blamed theoretically by others, but whenever it comes to a question of practice they approve of it under another name. It is then called good-breeding, a becoming degree of submission to the rules of society, and there can be no doubt that the approbation of it is perfectly sincere. George Eliot's father quarrelled with her for her want of this virtue, and was reconciled when she assumed it.

Our greatest difficulty in understanding past ages is to feel for a moment, by an effort of imagination, as if we had their moral sense. After all our efforts we invariably perceive that we have not that, nor are we really neutral, but we have a moral sense of our own which judges in its own way as our noses do. What strikes a thinking reader most in ancient literature is the manner in which actions are narrated, without blame, which to us are utterly revolting. Instead, therefore, of understanding past times by instantaneous sympathy, we only come to understand them, if ever, after a careful study of obsolete ideas.

Ideas that are not obsolete at all, but only foreign, are often quite unintelligible to us, and this is especially true about ideas connected with that sense of beauty and ugliness in actions which is called the moral sense. I was reading lately a story by Octave Feuillet, *Honneur d'Artiste*, in which an artist fights a peculiar sort of duel. The combatants fire shots at a target, and the less successful of the two shooters is to commit suicide after a certain delay. The artist is the one so designated, and his "honour" consists in shooting himself at the appointed time, though his wife implores him to live and his enemy has released him from his bond. This may appear admirable to a French novelist, but it does not appear admirable to me, as the engagement was one that (in my view) the artist had no right to undertake, and the fulfilment of it was an abandonment of his paternal duty.

It is plain, however, that although many actions may fail to excite in ourselves the pleasure that belongs to the beautiful, they do awaken in others the noble sentiment of moral approbation, and are therefore so far good that they maintain the sense of moral beauty by exercising it. Sometimes the feeling is of a mixed nature, as when Europeans have been called upon to witness the terrible ceremony of Hara Kiri, in Japan. A nobleman is condemned to death, but being too exalted to pass by the hands of the executioner, he commits suicide with the sword in the course of a solemn function, the very moment of death being accurately foreseen, as it comes in its due place in the ceremonial. Here the European spectator does not approve of the suicide, but he cannot refuse his admiration to the calm courage of the actor, and that high aristocratic training which enables him to face death with so much dignity, sustained by a pride of caste that endures to the bitter end.

CHAPTER VII

THE HUMAN CLAIM TO SUPREME BEAUTY

THE weakness of this claim lies in the absence of independent testimony. Man is *juge et parti* at the same time. He could hardly affirm that he was the strongest or swiftest of living creatures on a planet producing the elephant and the albatross, but the claim to beauty is one that, in its nature, cannot be disputed, and the other animals do not, as yet, appear to have formed any clear opinion on the subject. The nearest approach that we know of to the opinion of another animal is that held by the coloured races of our own species; and they do not admire the European complexion, which appears to them both unhealthy and unpleasant. We, on our own part, limit our unrestricted admiration of the human species to our own quarter of the world. The lips of the negro, the oblique eyes of the Chinaman, are not, in our secret opinion, evidences of good taste in Nature; and although by the caprice of fashion our women have imitated the hinder parts of a Hottentot beauty in their dress, they would not go so far as to pray for such a natural addition to their charms.

Our estimate of human beauty—by which we mean the beauty of one amongst the numerous races of mankind, and that one, of course, our own—is vitiated by a degree of self-esteem which is only beginning to be diminished by the most recent teachings of science. So long as Man believed himself to be the centre of the universe, the being for whose convenience the sun ran his appointed course, and whose fate as an individual was important enough to be determined by combinations of the stars—so long as Man believed himself to be the descendant of the gods, and resembling them so closely that they could be represented by copying his own shape—it was inevitable that he should look upon himself as the most perfect of mortal beings. Then came the scientific spirit, with its suggestion that he was more probably a rising than a degenerated creature, that instead of being the descendant of gods he had some ungainly and

A CONTRAST

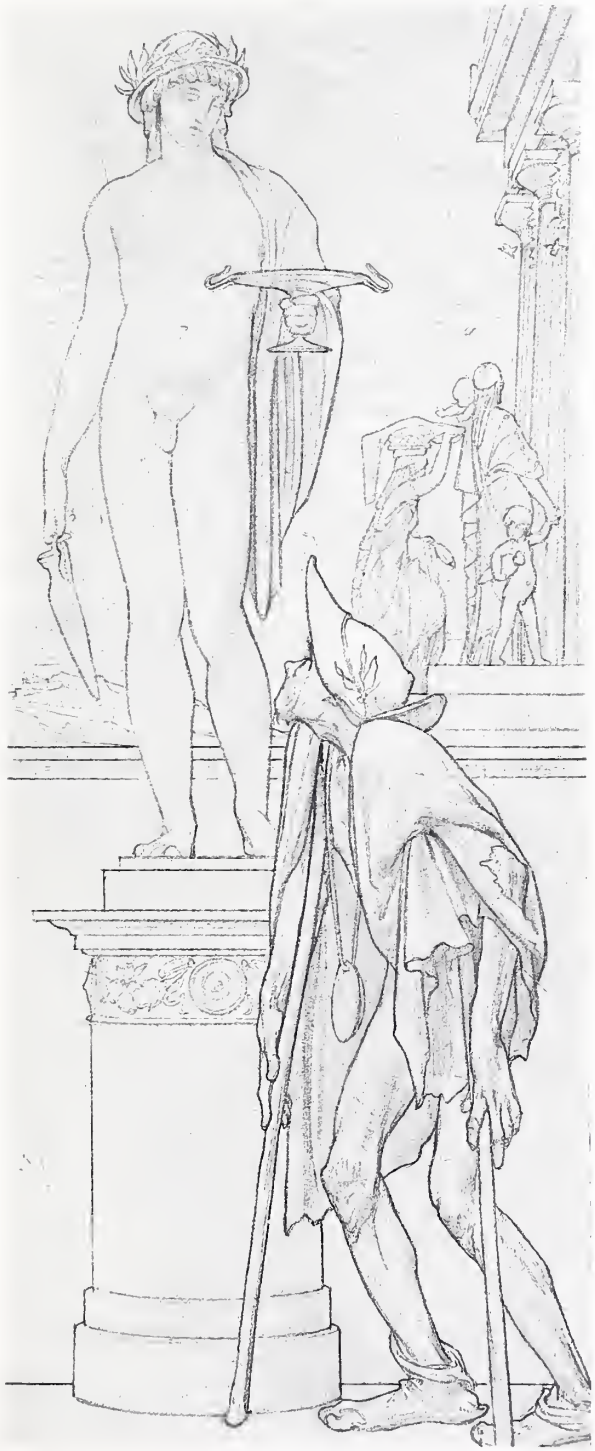
DRAWN BY SIR FREDERICK LEIGHTON, P.R.A.

REPRODUCED IN HÉLIOGRAVURE BY BOUSSOD AND VALADON

A COMPOSITION in strong, clear outline with slight hints of shade. This is a technical combination of which there are many examples in the drawings of the old masters. Here the linear drawing is by far the more important element; there is no pretence whatever to full modelling, yet modelling and light-and-shade are both faintly suggested. This kind of drawing is well adapted to classical subjects.

It is interesting to see a classical master occupied for a moment with ugliness and decrepitude, which the classical spirit is usually so careful to avoid. Thanks to Sir Frederick, who kindly allowed me to have this little work reproduced; I have been able to exhibit human ugliness in what is still a beautiful drawing.

In vain the unfortunate cripple looks up to the model of ideal beauty. A rich man could sign a cheque and cure him of his poverty; all that the beautiful person can do is to exhibit to envious eyes the graces and proportions that he is unable to impart.



inarticulate animal for his ancestor, and that the time of his perfection may be rather in the future than the past. This change in the standpoint of the mind leaves us free to criticise the beauty of Man. He is undoubtedly the most intelligent creature known to us, but it does not follow that he is the most beautiful. Even within the limits of the human race itself, the highest intelligence is very rarely associated with beauty.

The reader may have observed that I have not begun by attempting any definition of beauty, but rather by assuming a degree of concord on the subject sufficient for a literary understanding. The chances are that as the reader and myself are probably of the same race, and have been educated under similar influences, we shall be nearly of the same mind. For example, in Sir Frederick Leighton's "Contrast" my opinion is that the upper figure is the more beautiful of the two, and I hope to be right in this. It seems to me that the heads of the Theseus and the Venus of Arles, in this volume, are both beautiful, whilst that of Combe is grand and majestic rather than beautiful. As to the naked figure, I never saw a beautiful one drawn by Rembrandt or an ugly one by Titian. Here, again, I hope to be right enough for one who pretends to no authority on the subject.

On the rarity of beauty in nature I may, however, quote an authority who is extensively recognised. Raphael wrote in a letter to his friend Castiglione, "Considering the rarity of good judges *and beautiful women*, I make use of a certain idea that presents itself to my mind. I am not sure that this idea has any artistic value, all I know is that I endeavour to give it such a value." In other words, it was the rarity of satisfactory beauty in nature that compelled Raphael to idealise. The same reason, in every age, has made idealisation a necessity for all art that is founded upon beauty and not upon some other kind of interest.

The human claim to supreme beauty may come partly from the facility with which we all of us idealise in imagination, and partly from another cause. The other cause is the subtle and unavowed operation of the sexual instinct. We know that when this instinct acts with all its strength in the passion of love it always enhances and exalts the beauty of the object. In a degree greatly diminished, but still not without a constant effect, all persons of one sex may be inclined by the same instinct to a favourable judgment of the other. Men have a persistent tendency to discover beauty in women, and there is certainly in the female sex at least a willingness to overlook the coarseness and frequent ugliness of men. This indulgence towards masculine defects is most visible in the lower classes, where young women of considerable refinement, both in cleanliness and in language,

often accept lovers who are far less civilised than themselves. The sexual influence is also visible in the well-known incapacity of men for governing female servants, and, indeed, for governing women of any kind, except by formal legislation, which is prudently accomplished when women are not present, or hidden behind a lattice.

Artists are probably more independent of sexual feeling, as to the appreciation of beauty, than men to whom the observation of natural form is less familiar. They are certainly more severe than others in the criticism of nature, and though, no doubt, they discover many beauties there which escape the untrained eye, they are not so liable as other men to the illusion that they have discovered perfection. Raphael's studies from life show plainly that he had no illusions about nature, and that his idealism was consciously added afterwards, as a tire-woman puts a becoming dress upon her mistress. Even Boucher (I mention him because he was to prettiness what Raphael was to beauty) made heavy and unideal studies from life, which he afterwards refined upon in his designs and pictures. There is a Venus of his, or rather a study from nature for a Venus, which is as heavy as a Flemish woman by Jordaens. Sometimes, even in Boucher's works, unidealised nature gets into his finished art, as in the knees of another Venus, which are those of a fat matron. The finished pictures of Raphael never dispose us to hilarity, because, in them, nature is always dissimulated by the ideal. In Rubens, on the contrary, there is often something that tickles our sense of humour, and that is the artist's indiscretion in revealing too much of nature. There is a picture called "The Three Graces," at Vienna, which represents three women holding up a large basket of flowers. The subject might have been treated by a Greek or an Italian without danger, but Rubens makes it ridiculous by giving us three well-fed Flemish ladies without their clothes. The first idea that suggests itself is not beauty but too much eating of beef, and the next how came these ladies to be so scantily attired in the grounds of a genteel residence? The opposite extreme of natural yet inelegant meagreness may be seen in Rembrandt's etching of "The Bathers," and in his etched study of a young man reclining, which do, no doubt, show human nature as it too frequently is. A picture by Millet in the Luxembourg, finely composed and good in light and shade, represents a peasant woman helping another out of a river; one sees at a glance that they are peasant women, though they have no clothes.

The ludicrous element in realism comes from the contrast between human pretension to beauty and the reality. If there were no pretension, even such a thing as Courbet's masterly study of the big woman (I forget

the name of the picture) would not excite a smile. We see the mountain of flesh, supported on its two huge columns, and we think of the dreams of the poets. The sturdy or meagre reappearance of nature is the unfailing source of material for the caricaturist when he depicts bathers by the sea-side, with their paunches and huge breasts, or their stick-like arms and spindle-shanks. Here and there amongst them appears the pretty girl, attractive rather than beautiful, who "has her hour" in the great flux of things. In a few years she too will have become thin or fat, and in either case be shapeless.

There is, I believe, hardly any one of the lower animals that so frequently fails to reach its physical perfection as we do. If the reader has seen a quantity of mackerel or herring just caught in the Channel or Loch Fyne, he will have been struck by the general prevalence of the kind of beauty that belongs to them both in surface and in curve. There is a telegraph line near my house, and in summer I can see the swallows perched upon it, a hundred side by side. They are quite remarkably equal in bird-beauty; you do not see a skeleton by the side of a round ball, but that moderate degree of plumpness in all of them which gives the most beautiful curve to their little bodies. There is the same equality when they spread their wings. The reason in these cases is that bird and fish have no protection from the terrible law of the survival of the fittest, the infirm being cleared away almost immediately by their failure in the struggle for life; and there is a further reason in identity and healthiness of occupation, all swallows doing the same things, and those things most favourable to health when they have vigour enough to endure the almost incessant locomotion. Birds and fish have been admirably idealised by the Japanese, and by a Frenchman of genius, M. Habert Dys, yet I do not perceive in their idealisations any such elevation of beauty above nature as there is in the Greek ideals of man.

The world gains greatly in variety of interest by the rarity of beauty in mankind. The highest types of beauty are not many. When we descend to prettiness we find already a much greater variety, and the interesting cases of imperfect prettiness are not only very numerous but most curiously varied in their imperfection. As a subject of simple curiosity, the field of human ugliness is infinite; it admits of every variety of monstrous shape and irregular conformation. The liberty of Nature in creating ugliness is like the liberty of folly in the moral world. So long as men remain perfectly wise they have little liberty of choice; there are not many things that they can do, but once emancipated from the restrictions of wisdom they may commit an endless variety of extravagances. It is the rather

wearisome monotony of the highest beauty that gives such charm to the varieties of prettiness and such a curious interest, and even attraction of a peculiar kind, to Nature's inventions in misshapen bodies and plain faces. There is unquestionably a sort of pleasure in looking upon ugliness when Nature has been eminently successful in that line, just as one may detest vulgarity and yet enjoy the behaviour of a thoroughly vulgar man, as Charles Lever evidently did. Albert Dürer engraved ugly limbs as industriously as a Greek would have carved beautiful ones, but in Dürer this may have been due partly to insensibility and partly to his strong enjoyment of incidental variety in line. Lionardo's pleasure in ugliness was decidedly an interest in deformity for itself; the principle of his method in caricature is not the exhibition of character, but the exaggeration of parts in which Nature herself had already exceeded proportion. The same principle was carried out (to a minor degree, but with more expression) by a member of the French *Assemblée Nationale*, M. Jules Buisson, who amused himself by drawing portraits of his fellow-members which will keep a permanent interest as historical documents. These portraits are a long commentary on the thesis that humanity is ugly, but wonderfully varied in its ugliness. The too-observant artist detected every irregularity of feature, the eyebrow higher than its fellow, the crooked nose, the bumps protuberant on some enormous forehead, or the hollows carved out by emaciation in some fleshless face. It was caricature, yet so truthful as to leave always a doubt, very unfavourable to the subject, as to the limits where the caricature began, and half its efficacy depended upon modelling, and lights and darks, whereas ordinary caricature is much more an affair of line. The artist said that truth, sincerity, variety, and liveliness of interest were admitted to be qualities of his work, but that complaints were made about the absence of beauty. He laid the blame on universal suffrage, which is not æsthetic in its choice. Our own members of Parliament are immortalised by Mr. Harry Furniss, and he, too, conveys the impression that ideal beauty is rarely found amongst legislators. It may be fair to his models to give a summary indication of his method. First, he studies the victim seriously in the variety of his aspects, then he fixes upon the features that can be exaggerated without losing the likeness, and gradually, in successive caricatures, insists upon it more and more till he has educated us to accept as resembling the original what is really like some previous exaggeration of his own.

The body may exhibit striking contrasts, as Sir Frederick Leighton has shown us, and there may be inexhaustible material in nature for studies of ugliness like those which had such a curious interest for Lionardo, yet the

utmost difference between one body and another does but inadequately represent the difference of minds. The towering height of intellect that enables a man to see far over the heads of his contemporaries may be more fitly compared to a great architectural elevation than to the seven or eight feet of an exceptional human organism. The moral contrasts are greater still, and here the prospect may be more encouraging. There is, I sincerely believe, more moral than physical beauty in the human world. It has often been the pleasure of novelists to exhibit some variety of moral loveliness in men who were not Apollos, and in women whose profile was not comparable to the Venus of Arles. Here literature has a great advantage over the graphic and the plastic arts, which cannot explain, except by some occasional incident, the qualities that make a whole life beautiful. The difference between physical and moral beauty is so much in favour of the latter that it often increases as people advance in life, and sometimes attains its highest perfection in the amenity and charity, and kindly forethought for others, that dignify a serene old age. On the other hand, physical deformity is seen at once and we know the worst about it, which is merely, after all, that a bone is misshapen or that flesh does not take the curves most agreeable to the eye, whereas the peculiarity about moral deformity is that we never know all about it, the base character always holding in reserve for us, as an unpleasant surprise, some unexpected revelation of its baseness. The conclusion from these considerations is that the art, in painting or sculpture, which is founded upon physical beauty, does not represent humanity, but only a condition of the body which is rarely realised in actual life, and then only for a short time, though it may be ideally desirable like life in the Elysian Fields. It seems impossible that any one with a keen sympathy for toiling and suffering humanity should give himself up entirely to the pursuit of beauty, or that he should be always asserting the human claim to supremacy in this quality, which is doubtful, when the moral and intellectual supremacies of mankind, in the best races, are beyond dispute.

CHAPTER VIII

THE VARIETY OF ARTISTIC INTERESTS IN MAN

IT has often been assumed that beauty is the special object of art, and that the beautiful in man is the quality that the artist ought especially to seek for and expound. When, however, we take a comprehensive survey of the products that the fine arts have accumulated for us in the course of many ages, we find that so far from being limited to the cult of the beautiful, they have, in fact, included an almost infinite variety of interests amongst which the beautiful is occasionally dominant, and that the beautiful is not the catholic religion of art, but only one of several different Churches into which that cult is divided. There is a vulgar error, even amongst scholars, that the study of the beautiful is a kind of sensual indulgence, because it happens to be associated, in their minds, with that of the naked figure. In reality, however, it is much more a discipline of taste than an indulgence of it, the best evidence of this being that works of the highest beauty are never attractive to the multitude, which they undoubtedly would be if they offered a sensual enjoyment. Galleries of antique sculpture, containing the finest examples of beauty in the nude that the world has ever possessed, are so deserted, even in the heart of great cities, that it is possible to study there in undisturbed tranquillity. A stunted Dutch boor in the most shapeless clothing is more attractive than Æsculapius in his drapery. The highest price ever paid for a modern picture has been given for a representation of two ungainly French rustics with a wheelbarrow and a dung-fork.[1] The same popular indifference to beauty prevails in the appreciation of landscape. It is not the most beautiful scenery that people care to see represented, but the most homely and the most familiar. They are usually indifferent to the

[1] Since this was written a still higher price (£34,000) has been paid for a Meissonier, "1814," by M. Chauchard. This is not a beauty picture, but represents a number of grave Generals on horseback. Its charms are serious truth and a stern pathos.

sublimities of mountain form, but they like to recognise the common operations of agriculture.

Far from complaining of the frequent indifference to the highest beauty, I regard it as fortunate for art, because it answers to the ordinary economy of Nature. If art were confined to the beautiful it would have to neglect common humanity to seek out the most exceptional specimens; and these, again, it would be invariably compelled to idealise. Art would therefore not answer to nature generally, as it does now, but only to a very small part of nature, to which it could only be faithful just so far as might suit the exigencies of a cultivated and fastidious taste. The artist who is devoted to the beautiful has, no doubt, a field vast enough for a lifetime, but his special culture isolates him from ordinary humanity. For him the world must seem to have an (artistically) uncivilised appearance. He would hardly be satisfied with anything less than the best-made Athenians grouped under marble porticoes in the purity of a Grecian atmosphere. Even in them he would find much to criticise if he could see them in reality, the truth being that the love of the beautiful is an ideal passion, never wholly satisfied in this world.

Art is so far from being limited to the beautiful that ugliness is admissible in works, not of caricature merely, but of the most serious import. An ugly man may be quite as fine a subject for a bust as a handsome one; and if there is power in his face, whilst the handsome face is weak, the balance of interest will be on the side of ugliness. The face of Littré, from which beauty was entirely absent, was interesting to artists by the power of thought in the heavy brow, by the depth of the eyes under the shaggy eyebrows, by the lines of thought in the seamed visage, and the energy of *labor improbus* in the disproportionate lower lip. Even the very awkwardness of the lank, straight hair was in harmony with the austerity of the scholar.

The liberty enjoyed by artists for going beyond the limited region of the beautiful opens for them the worlds of intelligence and feeling which a strict obedience to the laws of beauty would have closed. This enables painting, and even sculpture (though sculpture in an inferior degree), to excite human interest and sympathy almost as much as literature. The class of subjects, for example, belonging to the pathos of poverty which has been so frequently and so poignantly illustrated in modern times, especially by Joseph Israels, can hardly be associated with beauty, but appeals directly to the heart. If the reader will compare any pathetic scene in which beauty is cared for — such, for example, as Flaxman's design of Achilles in tears on the body of Patroclus — with one in which

it is not cared for—such as the poor, dazed widower of Israels, whose wife's body is stretched on the miserable bed—he will see at a glance how great a pathetic advantage is gained by the abandonment of beauty. Flaxman makes Achilles pose like a muscular model, he is careful about the profile of Patroclus (who does not look really dead), and he accurately draws the ornaments on the couch, the helmet, and the shield. Israels finds nothing ornamental in the poor man's cottage, and the solitary living inhabitant has no comeliness—he has only poverty and sorrow. You admire the graceful and ingenious Anglo-Greek composition, but the picture of desolation brings the moisture to your eyes.

Amongst English artists of the present day Mr. Fildes is one of those who have found their way most directly to the human heart; and although, no doubt, he appreciates beauty in well-grown, handsome specimens of our race, it will not be found, I think, that there is any special seeking after it in his most pathetic works. The sketch of "The Widower" in this volume shows no care for beauty, except perhaps in the child; and the pathos of the subject would have been much diminished if, instead of a plain English labourer with his uncouth clothing, the Widower had been a good-looking gentleman in a drawing-room.

It has been said that whilst beauty and ugliness are both admissible in art, and both admitted by great men, prettiness is inadmissible. Yet the variety in art is large enough even to admit prettiness, which has its place as an agreeable and cheering influence just as it has in nature. It bears the same relation to beauty that charming conversation bears to eloquence; it is not an inferior quality of the same thing, but an essentially different thing that may be considered inferior in rank, but more commonly and generally acceptable. Severe art of all kinds, especially in the nude, must rigorously exclude prettiness and dedicate itself either to beauty or to dignity and majesty; but there are extensive classes of art that do not pretend to be severe, and which are perfectly at liberty to celebrate prettiness if they please. Some of the most famous artists have painted pretty women, and they have this in their favour, that whilst the beautiful is very rare in nature, a pretty face is frequently to be met with. Prettiness ought not to be associated with the nude, but with graceful and elegant attire. It need not disdain even the latest fashions when there is anything in them that may be available as an adjunct for the enhancement and embellishment of itself.

There is hardly anything that man does which cannot be made a legitimate subject for art, the chief difficulty being, not in man himself, but in the things that he has made and with which he clothes and surrounds

THE WIDOWER

By Luke Fildes, R.A.

Etched by G. W. Rhead

This is from an oil-study for the well-known picture bearing the same title.

In the study Mr. Fildes has worked simply for himself, and it happens to have turned out a vignette merely because the artist concentrated his attention on what chiefly interested him—the face and hands of the father and the face of the child. The subject became in this way peculiarly adapted for etching; so, with the kind consent of the painter, Mr. Rhead attempted it, and very successfully, according to the opinion of Mr. Fildes himself, who is unquestionably the best judge. Possibly, if the subject had been intended for etching from the beginning, the feet and legs of the Widower might have been more thinly outlined, but that is a matter of small importance. The essential merit is that the expression of the faces is perfectly preserved. Besides this, a good oil-sketch has suggested a good etching—I mean as to technical qualities—and for this it is certainly better than a completed picture.

Tenderness is more touching in our rough sex than it is in women, as we have not much reputation for it; still Mr. Fildes is not wrong in attributing to us some capacity for tenderness that may be ready for practical use in the absence of our feminine superiors.

G. Woolliscroft Rhead Sc.

himself. Without presuming to set bounds to the ingenuity of artists, I should say, for example, that an artistic talent would have a difficulty in developing itself if confined strictly to the material in our manufacturing towns. Artists are sometimes born there, but they do not employ themselves in celebrating the work they see around them, though such labour is on a far more imposing scale than the occupations that artists have always willingly represented. Mr. Stott of Oldham does not paint the interior of cotton-mills, as Millet painted the humbler and simpler work done in the cottages at Barbizon. Artists do not paint the interiors of Manchester ale-houses, as the famous Dutchmen painted the ale-houses of the seventeenth century in Holland. Man himself is as interesting in Lancashire as anywhere else; it is only the things about him that discourage artistic representation. So with the externals of religious worship. Protestant painters working for Protestant buyers prefer Roman Catholic to Lutheran and even to Anglican ceremonies. If you propose the word "Bishop" to an artist he will illustrate it with a mitre and a chasuble (as Sir John Gilbert has done in the present volume), not with lawn sleeves. Art is prelatical and royalist, not from partisan conviction, but from its love of dignity made visible. When President Harrison entered upon his term of office there was much grandeur in the description of the ceremonies, but not in the illustrations, which were spoiled by the want of dignified costume and magnificent architecture. The coronation of some petty sovereign in the Middle Ages would have been more paintable, though his territory was but a parish in comparison with that which stretches from Canada to Mexico and from New England to California.

Here, then, it seems that we have come upon a restriction to the universality of the art that deals with man. If it is compelled to avoid very unfavourable surroundings it cannot always *accompany* human life, but will often lag behind it in a *rêverie* of reminiscence. Or it will transport the knowledge of man which it has gained in the present to a costumed illustration of the past. What happens in reality is that Art adapts itself to circumstances by assuming dignity, or by sacrificing it, and by the employment of the most various technical methods. By this adaptation of itself to its subject, Art does in reality include the whole of human life, even those aspects of it from which the beautiful is completely absent. Art of the most serious and elevated kind certainly finds a difficulty in dealing with the life of the modern middle and upper classes, though even here it has occasionally been dignified and truthful at the same time, especially in portrait. On a lower plane, with less dignity and the admission of humour, it represents our familiar existence successfully enough, even in painting;

as, for example, in the "Derby Day" and "Railway Station" of Mr. Frith, to which neither the artist himself nor any other competent judge would attach much æsthetic value, yet which will have an increasing interest for posterity as faithful representations of life in the Victorian age. It is felt, however, that oil-painting is too elaborate and too laborious an art for the abundant illustration of life which is neither beautiful nor picturesque, so that the best and most constant service in this task is rendered by the pen draughtsmen, a class of artists whose relative importance has been immensely increased by the improvement of the reproductive processes. We have also the woodcuts in the illustrated newspapers, which bear the same relation to fine art that the newspaper paragraph bears to literature. They have, as a rule, no composition, and can afford no æsthetic pleasure, but their very independence of artistic exigencies makes them all the more serviceable for their own special utility. All that ought to be aimed at in the current illustration of life from day to day is simply the bare truth, both as to costume and scenery. There has been progress for some time past in the direction of plain veracity, and also, I believe, a more complete abandonment of the artistic aims which are not compatible with it. Draughtsmen will do well to avoid all confusion of ideas on this subject. Art, in the high sense, is never compatible with perfect veracity of the narrative or descriptive kind; it has, of course, its own veracity, but that is different in its nature. The reason is that things do not happen, persons do not group themselves, inanimate objects do not present themselves, in the manner most favourable to arrangements of line, of mass, or of light and shade. The world and its incidents are, from the artistic point of view, as destitute of order as a crowd is to the eye of a soldier. Even those groupings of men which are orderly in another sense, such as a review of troops, are not orderly, that is, they are not composed, in the artistic sense. The background may contain rows of things, such as windows in a street, that are equally refractory. The draughtsman cannot evoke composition out of this without taking liberties that would diminish the interest of his work. We ought to expect nothing from him but the nearest degree of attainable accuracy. The frank recognition of this may have a beneficial effect in both ways—it may make us more grateful for plain truth and leave us with a keener appreciation of those infinitely precious qualities of higher art which are felt to be necessities in their absence.

MAN IN ART

PART III

RELIGIOUS ART

MERCURY

BRONZE STATUE BY RUDE

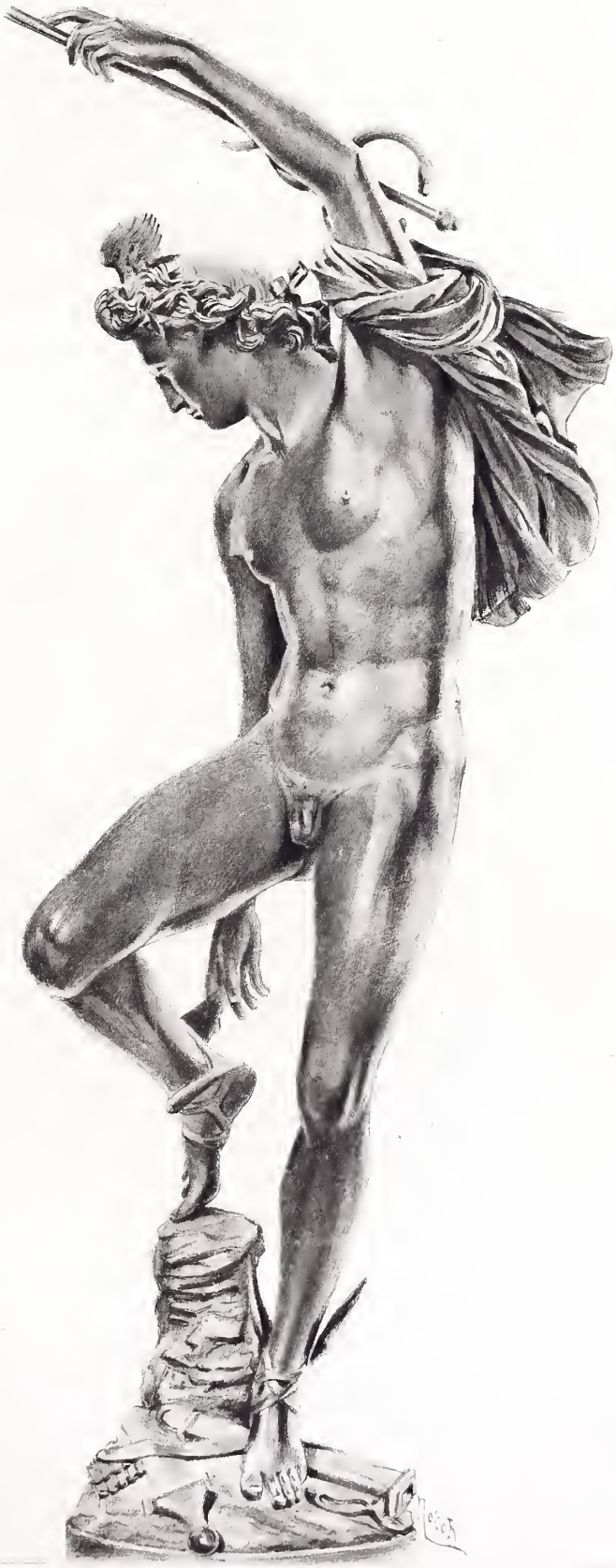
HYALOGRAPH DRAWN BY G. DE ROTON

(*Louvre*)

THE god is preparing for flight, having just fastened his talaria.

This is one of the few statues in which transient action has been satisfactorily represented. The work conveys by anticipation the idea of flight itself as the god is just on the point of quitting the earth; a moment more, and he will be rushing through the air like a meteor. The attitude is one of the most successful in modern art.

If the reader's interest in the sculptor is awakened by this fine conception, he will find a biography of him in my *Modern Frenchmen*. I remember being reproached for choosing unknown men as subjects for those biographies. Rude may be unknown in England, but in France he is in the first rank of great sculptors, and a room in the Louvre bears his name.



IMP. CHARDON-WITTMANN, PARIS

CHAPTER I

OF GODS, MEN, AND MONSTERS

A DISTINGUISHED critic, with whom I talked over the plan of the present volume, thought that I should meet with a great practical difficulty in dealing with ancient art. "You want," he said, "to follow Man in art, and instead of Man you will find the Gods. It is they and their history that occupy the first place; Man comes after, and the full interest in human doings only arises when the Gods are either forgotten or set apart in a region of their own." The difficulty, though at first it may appear serious, is in reality only verbal, for whatever the Gods may be from a theological point of view, they are, in the plastic and graphic arts, nothing more than organised beings, having the usual osseous and muscular construction that is familiar to us in ordinary life. In plain terms, for the sculptor or painter, a God is sure to be one of these three creatures :—

1. A human being—man, woman, or child.
2. One of the lower animals.
3. A monstrous composition in which the parts of different animals are unnaturally joined together.

The arts of design can never escape from the limited choice here given, as the God must be visible and alive, and the artist cannot possibly convey the idea of life without organisation. If, then, he proceeds to organise his God he must give him parts which convey the notion of something at the same time active, and powerful, and intelligent. The notions of power and activity are conveyed by an efficient well-nourished system of bones and muscles, the notion of intelligence is conveyed by a well-developed forehead and a penetrating eye. The minimum of physical representation is found in Christian art when the omniscience of Deity is represented by a large eye, painted by itself, but the eye is still organic, and it is human, all that is unnatural about it being that a human eye could see nothing if it were separated from a brain. Nevertheless, if a painter undertook to represent

the Divine eye by itself he would either study it from the living human organ or represent it from memory; he would not imagine some organ that he had never seen, such as may exist in another planet.

The application of these ideas to the arts with which we have most concern, those which illustrate the religion of Greece and Rome and the Christian religion, may be made laconically as follows.

In classical paganism the Gods are men of different types. Thus, Jupiter represents majestic manhood in its full maturity; Apollo, beautiful manhood having just attained physical perfection; Hercules stands for athletic muscular force in a man of the thick-set type; Mars represents the soldierly qualities; Vulcan, the vigour of man occupied in industry; and so on. The goddesses are Woman the haughty and jealous wife, Woman the beautiful and seductive mistress, Woman chaste and active, and Woman wise and brave. There is a boy-god who is active and mischievous. The monsters in Greek religion are "The great god Pan," with the fabled inhabitants of the woods such as the wandering centaurs and the satyr, half-man, half-beast.

Christianity, as represented in the fine arts, includes the same elements, though with much less variety. Manhood in vigorous age is represented by the venerable white-bearded Father, always muscular in arms and chest to indicate power, and stern in expression to indicate authority; manhood at or about the age of thirty has Christ for its representative, and He is variously portrayed—as muscular and strong, or thin, thoughtful, and ascetic. Woman is represented by the Holy Virgin, and infancy by the child Jesus. Besides these personages, who are all purely human as represented in the fine arts, there are an unlimited number of saints of both sexes, never spoken of as anything else than human, even though churches may be dedicated and prayers addressed to them. Of naturally organised beings inferior to humanity we find one in Christian art, the dove, which is studied faithfully from the familiar bird. As to monsters, the imagination of the Middle Ages had free scope with Satan and as many other devils as the artists felt inclined to represent; but such is the poverty and infertility of human invention that it has never yet succeeded in creating a devil, but only in composing one by combinations from pigs and bats. It may seem irreverent to call angels monsters also, but they unquestionably are so in the fine arts, as their wings do not belong to the human construction which is indicated by their bodies. They are not even well-imagined monsters, since they have two sets of fore-limbs, which is contrary to the economy of Nature, and they possess no muscles to move their wings. The angelic beings of fine art are, in fact, simply men and women with wings fastened on their backs, as you might tie those of a sparrow on the back of a mouse, but that would not

convert the mouse into a flying animal, like a bat. It is remarkable that artists who studied anatomy did not make the one consistently imaginable angel with arms converted into a flying apparatus that might at least *seem* practical—not that, however well contrived, it could have lifted the body from the ground. This substitution of the wing for the arm has been tried as an experiment, but with the effect that the angel looked like a man whose arms had been amputated, so much are those limbs, with the hands at the end of them, necessary to our conception of an unmutilated human being, and we cannot accept feathers as a compensation. The common practice is to make the angel a complete man, ready to hold a harp or brandish a spear, and then give him ample wings supposed to be moved miraculously. It is still better, perhaps, to make the wings small and merely symbolical, as in the little ones under the heads of cherubs, which suggest a kind of butterfly fluttering, though the heads weigh several pounds. The best instance, however, in all art, of this purely symbolical intention of the wings is the miniature ones in Mercury's cap, and those which he fastened to his ankles. Nothing can be more beautifully ingenious, nothing is more exquisite in taste, than this way of escaping from the anatomical difficulty about the flying man. For Mercury is man only, having no part of his own purely human organism interfered with by an inconvenient flying apparatus, only when he wants to fly he puts the wonderful *petasus* on his head, and fastens the magical *talaria*. This is not only a human way of setting about any business, but it is the essentially human way which distinguishes man from animals. Man temporarily assumes a convenience and lays it aside when he has done with it, the lower animals either have to carry it about with them at all times, or else are totally deprived of it. Mercury is at once a human being in his form, and human in realising the desire for swiftness by artificial aids. He assumes the wings that carry him "from heaven to earth from earth to heaven" as we put on a pair of skates. There is even a modern swimming apparatus that can be fastened like the *talaria* of Mercury.

It is impossible, however, to accord to the classical imagination the praise of consistent good taste in all its inventions. Mercury is a remarkably favourable example. The satyr is scarcely better contrived than the American showman's mermaid, obtained by stitching together the skins of a monkey and a fish. In the pure satyr the obvious contradiction to all natural analogies is that the lower limbs are those of a goat whilst the arms and hands are human. In a word, the satyr is inconsistently conceived. The natures of man and beast are not really mingled together in him; they are *pieced* together as a rabbit-skin might be sewn to a coat tail. It would

be a problem worthy of the combined skill of a man of science and a great artist to mingle the human and goatish natures completely; but the result would be revolting. The classical satyr is a human being going about on goats' legs, and being human he is capable of laughter. Of all classic imaginings the most monstrous, however, is the Centaur. He is invented on the same childish principle as the satyr, by mere piecing together, and the result is an anatomical impossibility. Not only has the compound creature two pairs of fore-limbs, but the internal anatomy is full of incompatibilities. So long as we think of a solid centaur, chiselled, whose inside is full of marble, or of a hollow centaur, cast in bronze, whose inside is full of air, these incompatibilities do not trouble us, but they strike us when we think of *life* as belonging to animal organisation. The man can breathe, but how are his little lungs to aërate all the quantity of blood that belongs to the unnatural partnership? How are his small teeth to masticate food for all that bone and muscle? Meanwhile, what are the horse's lungs doing, and how are they to get air, and how do the two separate sets of intestines work? It may be said that the imagination gets over these details, but the truth is that they shock and paralyse even the imagination itself. We can imagine anything that has some sort of apparent compatibility with natural law, as when Apollo shoots the arrows of pestilence, though they may fly supernaturally far; or as when Neptune dives and swims, though he may dive deeper and swim longer than our aquatic athletes; we may even imagine Mercury in his flight, having witnessed the flight of birds; but there is not, and there cannot be, anything like the centaur in the universe.

A striking proof of the inherent anti-naturalness of the centaur is that his monstrosity cannot be diminished. There is a tendency in the fine arts to attenuate monstrosities as taste advances. We may take the case of the satyr as an instructive and interesting example. The childish idea of making up a satyr is to give him the hairy hind-legs of the goat, with his hoofs, and to conceal the joining of the two natures under a gradation of diminishing hairiness. The animal nature is indicated again by horns and by tall pointed ears. But in the most refined sculpture the form of the satyr is purely and often beautifully human, with a very slight indication of horns, just as Nature herself would indicate, by a mere reminder, the history of a part no longer useful. The ears are sometimes pointed still, and sometimes this form is merely hinted at, and is so slight as to be almost imperceptible, or, finally, it may be entirely lost, and the ear come to be purely and perfectly human. Sometimes the legs, though quite those of a man, will be kept meagre in reference perhaps to the spindle-shanks of the goatish ancestor; but in other statues the legs themselves are fully and beautifully

A SATYR PLAYING WITH THE INFANT BACCHUS

FROM THE FARNESE PALACE, ROME

HYALOGRAPH DRAWN BY T. E. MACKLIN

(*British Museum*)

I CHOSE this example simply because I wanted a figure between the meagreness of the mediæval representations of Christ and the strength of the muscular man. This differs from the ascetic mediæval conception in being at the same time *gracilis* and graceful. It is less spiritual, or rather not spiritual at all, and more human.

In our age of reminiscences our minds are so haunted by the varieties of past conceptions that we have no clear and definite conception of our own. There is no modern idea of the naked figure which can be said to be completely disengaged from antiquity, since it was the ancients who taught us to see physical grace and beauty. But amongst antique statues there are few more modern than this, probably because there are few with more vitality.

T. E. MACKLIN.

developed. There is a child-satyr in the Louvre which promises to become a well-developed man, and there are adolescent satyrs both beautiful in form and graceful in attitude, as if their families had been admitted into the best of antique society, and learned deportment there, forgetting the rude old sylvan life in the ancestral forest.

We do not know any process equivalent to this by which the centaur could be deanimalised. The conditions of his supposed existence are such that the horse must remain equine; his legs cannot be turned into human legs, nor his tail diminished to a tuft. All that can be done with the centaur is to make him human as to his mind. This he was so completely as to fill the responsible office of a private tutor. Chiron understood his duties in this capacity in a very enlightened manner, teaching his illustrious pupils music and archery and something of primitive botany, a well-combined training in art, in memory, and in bodily exercise. You may think of Chiron at one time as a horse (if you think of his speed), and at another as a man (if you think of his acquirements), but never, certainly, as an inferior type of humanity. Mr. Morris begins by describing him as

> "A mighty gray horse, trotting down the glade."

But immediately after Chiron talks like a man, and slings a horn "about him," and puts a ring on his finger,

> "And in his hand he bare a mighty bow
> No man could bend of those who battle now."

The glamour that antiquity and poetry are able to cast over imaginary existence (in more recent times aided by the charm of colour in painting) makes the centaurs romantic for us as we imagine them galloping through vast forests, and leading a life that combined in perfection the sylvan pleasures of Robin Hood with the happiness of a wild horse. If, however, we allow imagination to realise such an existence more minutely, we perceive at once that the human half of the composite creature would be inconceivably miserable, that his activity would be of the most limited kind, and that any ordinary human body in fair health is far more convenient than his. It is curious that some of the earlier centaurs in art were more completely human and less equine, as they had human legs with the hinder half of a very little pony awkwardly attached where the Alpine milkmen fasten their one-legged stool. The conversion of this primitive centaur into a man would have consisted simply in amputating the pony and curing the wound. This reminds us of a theological work current in the eighteenth century and entitled the *Centaur*, which associated liberty of thought with bestial vice. The author took his title and comparison from a being that never existed.

The intellectual and sensual elements in human nature may be more aptly compared to a man on horseback. On the whole, the man governs the brute, yet he is constantly more or less in danger from the strength of the animal under him.

The monsters of mediæval religion have changed like the satyr. Devils in art were, for a long time, ludicrous, hideous, and grotesque, ill-contrived piecings together of parts of animals that might, indeed, suggest a combination of cruelty with brutish stupidity and lust, or at best the power of some huge reptile with his armoured resistance to attack, but there is not a single instance of a mediæval Satan with an intellect equal to his position. The devils even of great men like Dürer and Raphael are most puerile inventions. We have to go to literature for the first adequate conception of a Satan. Bunyan's Apollyon is vigorous, but he is made up; he has scales like a fish, wings like a dragon, feet like a bear, and his mouth is as the mouth of a lion. This is only the old-fashioned way of composing a monster, and the result is nothing consistent. Milton's infernal hosts are perfectly human in everything but their "rustling wings." As for Satan himself,

> "He, above the rest,
> In shape and gesture proudly eminent,
> Stood like a tower; his form had yet not lost
> All its original brightness: nor appeared
> Less than archangel ruined."

Here, at last, we have done with the monster and are come to the human Satan. His speeches, vigorous in style and thought, give a mental portrait of himself consistent with the physical description. It is Milton who has delivered the Satan of the graphic and plastic arts from caricature. Even in the common illustrations to *Paradise Lost* an attempt is made to give Satan nobility of form, a well-built figure, and a beautiful face marred only by its stern and desperate expression. Goethe afterwards came with a new conception that has had an equal influence, though of another kind. His devil is thoroughly human, even the wings have dropt away, and the Satanic nature is exhibited only as intellect (wit and sharpness) without heart. The keen shrewd face of Mephistopheles has succeeded to the proudly desperate face of the Miltonic Arch-fiend. Goethe's conception gained in human interest and in applicability to the modern world what it lost (and the loss was great) in majesty, terror, and sublimity. One significant difference is in mere physical scale. Mephistopheles is of ordinary stature; Satan, as he lies in the burning lake, has a body of some acres in extent (many a rood). He must be as tall, let us say, as the Eiffel Tower, not that this enormous stature has any influence on the representa-

tion of Satan in the fine arts, for in pictures he looks like a man, and a statue of him on the largest scale would seem but the colossal statue of a man. It is ever so in the plastic and graphic arts, we are always brought back to man, or to the animals that we know.

Of the two remaining monsters of antiquity, the griffin and the sphinx, the griffin is outside of our subject, because there is nothing human about him. He is, however, the best of the mixed fabulous creatures, as the aquiline and feline natures are both certainly present in him and tolerably well mingled, the most serious mistake being that which is committed in the Christian angel of giving wings and fore-limbs at the same time. There is a creature in the natural creation, the ornithorhynchus, which does appear like a mixture of bird and beast (and even, we are told, with evidence of a tendency to the reptile), but although it has the bill of a duck, it has hairy fore-legs instead of wings. Had it been endowed with a flying apparatus, the bones for stretching it would certainly have replaced those of the existing fore-legs. Notwithstanding one error, the griffin is a much better invention than the common mediæval devils, and in particular cases the genius of an imaginative sculptor has been able to make him not only terrible, but even for a moment credible, on condition that we do not think about anatomy.

There are two distinct species of sphinx, the wingless and the winged. The difference is of the utmost importance, as the wingless sphinx is a mixture of two natures, and the winged of three. The Greek sphinx, usually having the body of a lioness, with the head and breasts of a woman and the wings of some kind of bird, is very inferior, both in dignity and impressiveness, as well as consistency of invention, to the majestic wingless sphinx that accompanied the masterpieces of Egyptian architecture. In a combat with an armed man the Greek sphinx is hardly bigger than a wild cat, and flies at the man like a combination of that animal with a hawk and a woman in a passion, yet the effect of her weight and momentum is so slight that he receives her coolly on his shield. The great Egyptian sphinx is far superior as an imaginative conception. In the first place, two natures only are mingled in her instead of three, and this is a great advantage for consistency of construction. Again, the two natures are both mammalian, the woman and the lioness being both placental mammals. Finally, the difficulties about lungs and intestines, which make the centaur absurd, are completely avoided in the Egyptian sphinx, which requires nothing from our credulity beyond the belief that the cervical vertebræ of a lioness might exceptionally terminate in a human instead of a leonine skull. There is, in short, a minimum of absurdity in this conception, and on the positive

side, the side of constructive art, the Egyptians gave proof of the finest taste in making their sphinxes keep quiet, looking wise, and holding their physical strength in reserve. The consequence is that we almost accept the human head on the body of the lioness as a combination possible in nature; there is, indeed, nothing in the dignity and wisdom of the face to contradict the calm strength of the lioness, so long as her mighty limbs are stretched in the eternal repose of granite. The conception, too, has a terrible fascination for all of us, as Nature herself, like the granite sphinx, remains calm, silent, inscrutable; and though there may seem to be sometimes a play of sunshine on her great face, and sometimes a mystery of gloom, the firm lips open never, but keep the secret of innumerable years.

The exact converse of the Egyptian sphinx is the goddess Sexet, who had the body of a woman with the head of a lioness, and her statues afford interesting evidence of the extreme importance of the head. Whenever the human body is made to carry the head of an animal we have immediately the feeling that it is decapitated, even when the animal is of such high rank, relatively, as the lion. The sphinx looks infinitely wise, the lioness-headed goddess looks stupid and pitiable, and seems afflicted by a sad cerebral deformity or want of natural development. Nothing is more common in the literature that has animals for its subject than praises of the intelligence of the dog, but whenever in the fine arts the human body is accompanied by a dog's head, the effect upon us is not that of intelligence, but the contrary. No god seems godlike to our apprehension unless his deity is enthroned in a human brow. When we are told that the Olympian deities assumed the form of animals it was for purposes of disguise, when they are human it is not a disguise. Not even the head of an elephant would be a fit habitation for the mind of sovereign Jove, but the body of a strong man in ripe maturity is so fit for him that it is *himself*, and we cannot think of him in any other shape. Even the sea-god is not a fish in any part of him, but a complete human being down to the tips of his fingers and his toes. Neither is he a complete man with the addition of fins, as wings are given to the human Satan. He is a human sovereign, attended by a dolphin to suggest his watery empire to our minds. In like manner the English Queen has oriental attendants to remind us that she has a great empire in the East.

ŒDIPUS

PAINTED BY GUSTAVE MOREAU

ENGRAVED IN LINE BY LEOPOLD FLAMENG

THIS plate has appeared in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, but having always been protected by steeling, it is in absolutely perfect preservation.

It is one of the very rare examples of the purest possible line-engraving on the old principles, applied to the interpretation, rather than the imitation of a modern picture.

My opinion is that engraving of this simple, clear, and severe kind, is the most satisfactory of all, when the subject, as in the present instance, is perfectly adapted to it. Of course the entire absence of tone and mystery in such engraving makes it unsuitable for the interpretation of paintings executed on advanced principles. This is a kind of art statisfactory in itself, but not subordinate to nature, and the truth of it is not the visual truth. Everything here is strictly conventional, from the hard interpretation of flesh to the landscape and the lighting. The conception of this work is in a high degree decorative. It would be admirably adapted for mural painting, indeed it may be taken as a rule that if a design is suitable for severe line-engraving it will be good for mural painting also.

ŒDIPUS

CHAPTER II

PICTORIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF DEITY

THE truth is that there have never been any pictorial representations of Deity. No painter has ever had the opportunity of observing the shape and proportions of a God.

What all the painters of Gods have done hitherto has merely been to paint a man, more or less idealised, and deify him by calling him Apollo, Jupiter, or Jehovah.

Christianity, by the doctrine of the Incarnation, has clearly authorised anthropomorphism in art so far as the second Person of the Trinity is concerned, and this has brought the art of painting into closer relations with Christianity than with any other religion. The human Christ, the human Virgin, may both reasonably and permissibly be represented in pictorial art.

The representation of God the Father is more repugnant to modern sentiment, because modern conceptions of deity have extended with the increased knowledge of "the scale on which the universe is built." A muscular man, however physically expressive of tranquil strength, is felt to be an inadequate cause for the motion of a planet. But besides this insufficiency of force in a human deity, there is another defect still more contradictory of what we know about nature, and this is the defect of limitation. The physical strength of man is limited in its effects to a very short distance from his own body. In nature, on the contrary, the organising power works at inconceivable distances. Again, the action of a man is limited to one or two things at once, its utmost effort of combination being the synthesis of the creative faculties in art. But the power that works in nature evidently does millions of things at once. If it is argued that by giving a human body to the Deity it is not intended to give him a human mind, the answer is very simple. The body, especially the head of a man, inevitably suggests the brain and mind of a man, and it cannot suggest anything else. But there are no minds in organised nature, as it is known to

us, that would be capable of organising nature. A mind capable of that is beyond our experience. We know enough, however, to be certain that it could not think as our own minds think. Our minds go from one thing to another like a scavenger with his lantern investigating the treasures of a dust-heap. A mind that knew all things simultaneously and with perfect clearness would have no occasion for our ordinary mental operations. It would not proceed from the known to the unknown, there being, for it, no unknown. It would never observe, having no need of observation, nor investigate, being already at the end of every investigation. It would have no need for comparison, or for induction and deduction. And, as it would not study, so it would not contrive and construct in the human meaning of those words. And, in fact, we do not find that things are constructed in nature as ships and locomotives are by taking pieces of material and fitting them together. Natural things are produced according to the ways of Nature, not according to the constructive processes of Man. We do not know what the organising Power *is*, but we know that it is as different from human intelligence in the methods of its work as in the magnitude of its operations.

The difficulty as concerning the fine arts is that this mysterious Power is invisible and unpaintable. So long as theology remains primitive and barbarous it is within the scope of art, and affords good subjects for art, but as soon as it becomes enlightened it rises outside of the sphere of art. Mormonism, for example, is a return to early conceptions. To suit uneducated disciples it brings back the human God, and asserts that he has physical parts, like a man. If the world could be converted to Mormonism, the Deity would return again to art.

In the days of Michael Angelo there seemed to be no reason why God the Father should not be represented. The Jehovah of Michael Angelo is a vigorous and muscular old man, with a magnificent white beard. He effects the creation of Adam not by any slow process of evolution from inferior forms, nor by a simple exercise of will, but by extending his finger towards the earth as he floats by. In the "Disputa" fresco Raphael had no hesitation about painting God the Father as the Sovereign in the perfectly anthropomorphic shape of an old man with a severe countenance, and the orb of empire in his hand. When God the Father separates the light from the darkness, he is represented as a powerful man with abundant hair and beard, and hands pushing against the light clouds on one side and the dark clouds on the other, the legs striding vigorously over clouds that lie between. A modern Protestant feels that this attempt to represent Jehovah is too audacious. The attitude is, in reality, undignified, with legs

and arms in violent action, pushing and straddling. A God ought to be able to attain his ends without using his own limbs like a poor man whom nobody obeys. The further we go from the old ideas the more remote from us do such representations become. They belong to a state of mind that an intelligent critic does not censure, yet with which he can have nothing in common. He knows little about the mysterious Power that governs the universe, but he relies upon its one special characteristic of absolute regularity. Its force and action are as unfailing as the lapse of time; there is no effort because there is no weakness to be overcome by effort, and there is nothing that can be properly called strength, as the word is applied to men and animals. As we leave the old ideas more completely behind us the change brings an unexpected result in our more patient tolerance of the old ideas themselves. Minds nearer to Raphael than ours might be offended by his Jehovah; we do not take offence. For Voltaire, Raphael's Jehovah would have been ridiculous; he is not ridiculous for us, but only a remote conception of pre-scientific ages. And it may plausibly be argued that designs of the kind we have been criticising were never intended to represent any visible deity, but only to symbolise, in a form convenient for art, the sovereign power of the Invisible; except, of course, when it is positively stated in Scripture that God made himself visible to man. Sometimes Raphael would add an invention of his own, as in "God appearing to Noah," in which the Father is sustained in the air by three vigorous boys. There was no attempt, either in that subject or others of the same class, to spiritualise the Divinity by making him diaphanous; on the contrary, the figure and head are massive and substantial, and the sustaining angels are well-grown youths, with nothing supernatural about them except their mode of motion.

It is a descent from Michael Angelo and Raphael to Blake, but though the distance in artistic power and knowledge is immeasurable, the Englishman resembled the illustrious Italians in his readiness to give physical shape to theological conceptions. I mention Blake, too, the more willingly that he belonged to our own century, and that we find in him a very late and specially interesting survival of the old ideas. Blake was exactly like Michael Angelo in seeing no reason why God the Father should not be represented as a noble-looking old man with an immense beard. Blake died in 1827, and it is significant that Mr. James Cotter Morison spoke of the year 1829 as still "in the dark ages," meaning that those days are separated from ours, in their theological conceptions, as completely as if they really belonged to the dark ages. It is scarcely probable that, in the future, any artist will work in such intimate sympathy with early theology as Blake. It was as

real for him as for an imaginative child, so real that he would scarcely have been surprised to meet the white-bearded Deity walking in some English garden in the cool of a summer's day, or to see him float majestically on a cloud when the mist rose from some vale in Surrey, and the morning stars sang together.

I have compared Blake's conception of Deity with that of an imaginative child. Once, in my own boyhood, I happened to be on a canal bank when two little girls were gazing in wonder at what appeared to them the broad and dangerous expanse of water. After a solemn silence the elder child said to the other, "God could stride over the canal," thereby expressing an idea of Deity which was strictly that of antiquity, and much better suited to art than the reasonings of Mr. Herbert Spencer. The child's idea of the Divine might be exactly realised in colossal sculpture by our contemporary, Bartholdi.

CHAPTER III

THE EARLIEST CHRISTIAN ART

THE reader who wishes to have clear ideas about what is essentially Christian in art will do well to class, in his own mind, the earliest of all Christian art with antique rather than mediæval religion. That art was an inheritance from the time when the naked figure was a subject of serious study; and although the earliest Christian artists may themselves have drawn little, if at all, from nature, their minds were still furnished with forms, and in a great degree imbued with tastes and feelings, that had come down to them as a reflection from a not very remote antiquity. The study of this early Christian art is not the study of a beginning, but of a decadence; it is not a brightening dawn, but a rapidly fading after-glow. The interest of it is great, both from the antiquarian and the simply human points of view, but it has no historical interest except that which belongs to the art of one religion compelled to labour, in the days of its decrepitude, in the service of another. The art of the catacombs was not the product of Christianity, but only an attempt to express, by means derived from a different and even opposite culture, either those feelings which are common to all mankind, or an interest in the particular events of Christian history which seemed at that time the most acceptable. It is remarkable that the scene of the Crucifixion was not amongst them. Woltmann affirms that no picture of the Crucifixion appears before the seventh century. The most advanced modern Protestants, such as M. Réville, for example, would probably assign a theological reason for this; they would probably tell us that in those early centuries what is now known as the Christian theology had not yet developed itself sufficiently to concentrate interest in the death rather than the life of Christ. Another reason has been also given. It is said that the early Christians were still sufficiently near to classic times to have retained the old opinion about crucifixion as not only a most cruel but a dreadfully degrading punishment. Under the ancient Romans crucifixion was the

punishment of common thieves and murderers, and it therefore remained associated, in the popular mind, with persons of the lowest class and of the vilest character. We who have been accustomed to see the Cross made ornamental, who have seen it in silver and gold, decorated with the most beautiful handiwork of the most accomplished artificers, carried high in stately processions, embroidered on banners, borne in the arms of the proudest and most princely houses, made into the form of precious jewels, and worn in diamonds by the most distinguished commanders and the fairest women, we have become disqualified, by this great splendour and effulgence of the Cross, for thinking of it with the shame and horror that still clung to it through the decadence of the Roman Empire.

Ancestral Christian art, the art from which our own is derived, begins with the first representations of the Crucifixion. The earlier art, that of the still classical centuries, is not connected with our own artistic history. Like the rivers of Australia which lose themselves in the sand, it came to its own end and fertilised no distant fields. Our own Christian art has its origin in times of complete artistic barbarism. It began with total ignorance of the human form, with ignorance of modelling, ignorance of light and shade, and with the puerile conception of colour as the setting of bright pigments one beside the other, like the colours of a coat-of-arms. Everything had to be learned from the beginning, as if there had never been draughtsmen in Greece or Rome, and as if all the antique statues had been annihilated. Down to the fourteenth century the art of painting was not understood by the greatest intellects in Europe. In our own day we find men of powerful intellect who know nothing whatever about painting; but the difference is that all the arts are now known, at least theoretically, by their own students, whilst in the thirteenth century architecture was thoroughly understood, sculpture imperfectly, and painting not at all. "About A.D. 1350," says Woltmann, and the reader will observe the date, "there appear the first real signs of that which had been so completely lost, a conception of the true functions and capacities of painting—the first serious attempts to produce by means of that art the appearance of more than a single plane, to imitate effectually the solidity of objects, and to exhibit them in true relations to their surroundings."

CHAPTER IV

THE PRIMITIVE DEVICE OF GIVING IMPORTANCE BY SIZE

MEDIÆVAL artists frequently interpreted importance by size in the case of earthly sovereigns, who were made much taller than their courtiers. The same idea was sometimes carried out with much greater exaggeration in the case of great religious personages. In a picture by Carlo Crivelli a monk is praying at the feet of the Holy Virgin, and if he is of ordinary human size, the Virgin must be a maiden of Brobdingnag. It is, as to proportion, Gulliver at the feet of Glumdalclitch.

The prettiest application of this variety of proportion in mediæval art is that of the dwarf angels who render services to Christ or the Virgin, increasing their height by contrast. As a matter of artistic convenience the dwarfing of angels was ingenious for the obvious reason that their presence interfered much less with the principal personages than angels of full human size would have done. The little immortal beings could fly about like birds in their untiring activity. I do not know who first represented them flying near Christ on the Cross and collecting drops of the precious blood as they fell from the wounded hands. Raphael used this idea but did not invent it, as it is found in much earlier art. Probably it is due to some artist monk of tender poetical feeling.

The dwarfing of inferior persons in the presence of greater ones arose from artistic inability to give degrees of importance without alteration of size. Advanced art has many resources by which such a difficulty can be overcome. A clever modern artist gives importance by situation, or by lighting, or simply by ordering the lines of the composition so as to lead inevitably to a centre, where he places his important personage. Nothing is more remarkable, in highly-developed art, than the small space of canvas which is, in reality, occupied by the centre of interest. It may be not a figure but a face, or even the expression of an eye, from which no spectator can escape. The primitive artist knew nothing of these ingenuities. When

Giotto introduced sheep in a picture where a saint was also present, he made them the size of little dogs. Horses, in early art, are always ponies. The same principle was carried out with regard to inanimate accessories. The mediæval tree is invariably either a bush or a thin sapling, it is never a full-grown elm, oak, or chestnut. Raphael, who, for a great part of his short life, retained strong traces of mediævalism, only carried out the old principle when he made the boats on the Lake of Tiberias impossibly little for the fishermen. Noah's Ark is always, not only in early painting but for long afterwards, made much too small for the animals it is said to have contained. The earliest artists got over the difficulty about the Ark by frankly resorting to symbolism and making it about the size of a dog-kennel; in later times it grew to the still very insufficient dimensions of a canal-boat.

There is some connection between the state of mind which accepts these modifications of size and that which invented heraldry, where large things are reduced with equal facility and placed by the side of things that are less reduced. For example, I have before me two old coats-of-arms impaled together. In one are three calves, in the other three hammers, and, judging by the hammers, the calves are the size of rats. This would trouble nobody when the principle was acknowledged, and if any ignorant person made an objection, he would probably have been quite as much embarrassed by the differences of size which result from perspective in more advanced art.

It may be observed, finally, that some of the prettiest devices in mediæval art would have been impossible without great liberty as to scale; for example, it would often have been necessary to omit angels altogether if an ordinary stature had invariably been given to them. And, in fact, this liberty is still allowed in monumental sculpture, a well-known and striking instance being the Albert Monument, where importance is given to the Prince by making his statue colossal, whilst men of the greatest eminence in science, literature, and art are represented on a diminutive scale below him, as if they were creatures of a smaller species. Modern taste permits this in sculpture but not in a picture. In the Middle Ages people thought it not more extraordinary to paint a little monk at the foot of a colossal Virgin than to carve small figures of saints in the mouldings of a cathedral doorway, whilst statues larger than life were standing between the pillars just below.

THE BLOOD OF THE REDEEMER

PAINTED BY GIOVANNI BELLINI

REPRODUCED IN PHOTOGRAVURE BY BOUSSOD AND VALADON

(*National Gallery*)

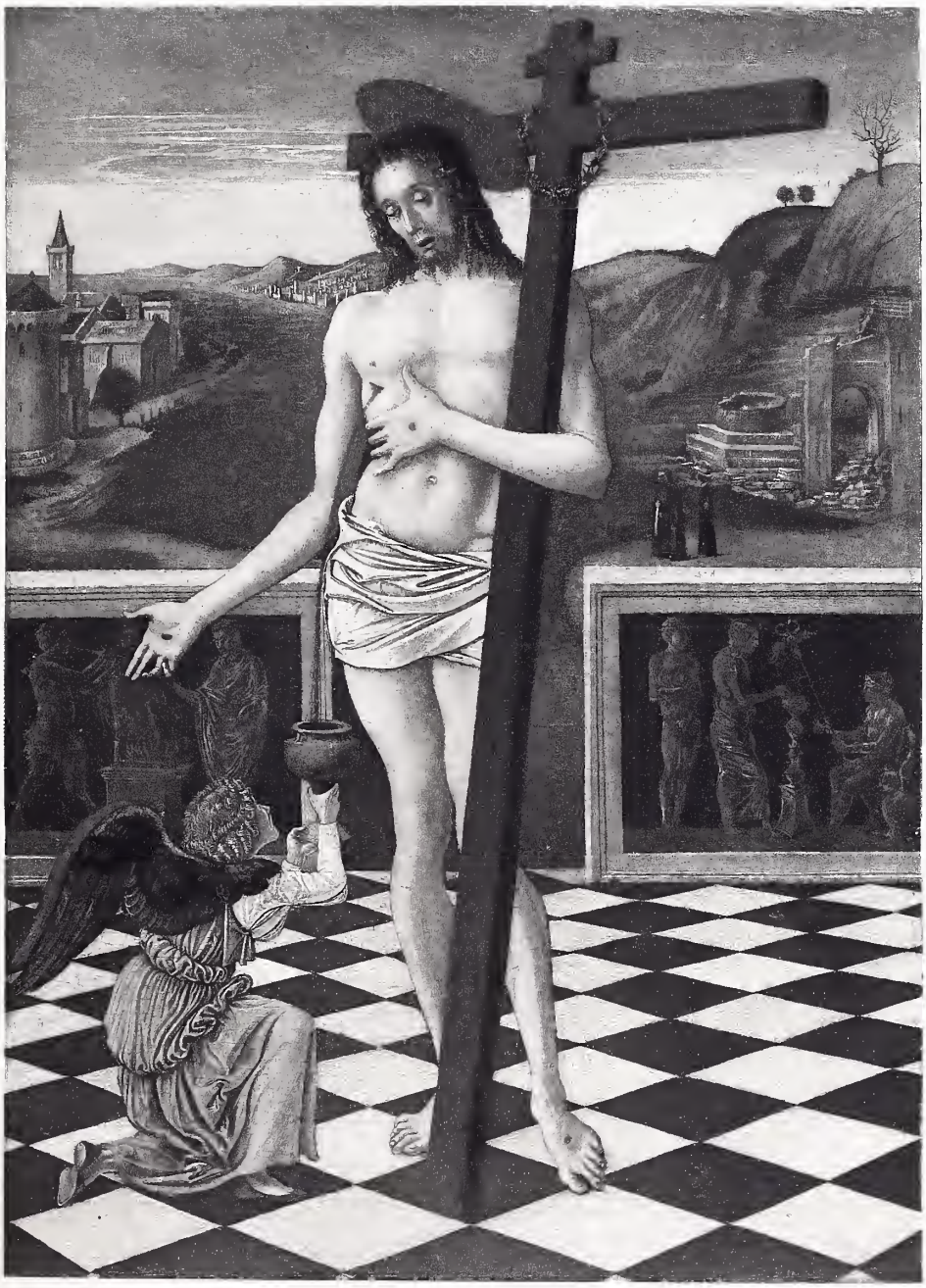
THIS picture is in various ways very valuable as an illustration.

It is an example of the old simple way of marking inferiority by smallness. The humility of the angel and her inferiority to Christ are marked both by attitude and by scale. In many old pictures angels are much smaller still relatively to Christ or the Virgin.

Although the picture is full of hard material things very definitely represented, it transcends matter in its meaning. The cup is small and would soon be filled, yet the blood flows copiously and eternally for the world, as in the holy sacrament.

Technically, this is an excellent example of early principles in painting. Above all things, linear clearness was valued by early painters. The marble pavement, so full of angles and so trenchant in its oppositions of black and white, is unpleasantly obtrusive, but it pleased Bellini by its sharpness of definition. The legs and feet are surrounded by a strong line to detach them from the pavement. The picture would have been much more beautiful without the hard straight lines of the ugly cross, but religious significance was preferred to the exigencies of art.

Early pictures of Christ have the advantage of representing a thin type of physical man without caricaturing him. In modern art the thin man is always ridiculed; here he is treated not only without ridicule, but with reverence, so that whatever beauty or refinement may belong to him, is fairly represented. This was another reason for choosing Bellini's picture.



CHAPTER V

INTELLECT AND SYMPATHY IN EARLY CHRISTIAN ART

THE relation of early Christian art to the intellectual life of the world is difficult to define. It was a handicraft practised by ignorant men (even Perugino was uneducated); and although their productions are now objects of great interest to people of the highest culture, this is owing more to the modern curiosity about "origins" of all kinds than to any intellectual quality in early Christian art itself. The truth is, that the first signs of emancipation in such art were not on the side of intellect, but on the side of feeling. The escape from the dead forms of rigidly symmetrical arrangements, and from the unmeaning labour involved in the imitation of costly ornaments, was through human sympathy and interest. In the worst of early Christian art both faces and attitudes are destitute of expression; the figures are but dressed dolls, and the composition purely formal, like the setting of ornaments on a chimneypiece; but as the feelings and sympathies of the workman began to express themselves the figures became more human in character and gesture, and were drawn together by sympathy into better connected groups. The modern critical student seizes with avidity on every sign of awakening sentiment. Weary of the desert of conventionalism, he longs for the refreshment of a more living nature, and gives exaggerated credit to the primitive artist for signs of feeling that he would pass without notice in a contemporary. After being a passionless queen, glittering in jewels, the Virgin gradually assumed the character of a tender mother, and her dress became more simple as her feelings became more natural. Finally she has no adjuncts of artificial grandeur, the heavenly regalia are laid aside, and in the capital of Catholic pomp and splendour, Mary is nothing more or nothing less than the sweetest type of purely human motherhood. As a consequence of the same progress, the infant Jesus loses his consciousness of royalty, his supernatural wisdom, and becomes playful, caressing, delightfully free and innocent in attitude,

interested, like a child, in people and things, and therefore himself interesting.

The sentiment of early Christian artists shows itself in the gentle ministration of angels, like those which bend down the branches of the palm-tree in Schoengauer's "Flight into Egypt," that Joseph may gather the dates, and like those which, in many early pictures, collect the precious blood, drop by drop, as it falls from the pierced hands of the Crucified. The service of angels, in the best of early art, is not merely a part of divine state, like that of obsequious courtiers, it is willing, busy, affectionate. Evidently the conception which the primitive painters had of the angelic life was that the happiness of it consisted in joyful service. These winged immortals, to whom fatigue of body and weariness of spirit are alike unknown, fly fearlessly in the presence of God, watchful with an unfailing readiness. For them there exists no physical impediment, and though their flight is swifter than the incandescent rush of an aerolite it does not disturb the folds of the white robes about their feet. It is a world, this heaven of the early painters, beyond all human experience so far as it is situated in the sky, but we can imagine it to be blissful in that clear, pure air and that perpetual heavenly light. Only one thing, to my taste, is painful in that ideal. Often round the Divine Presence there is a sort of frame like two pointed arches set base to base (technically called the "almond"), and in this frame the heads of little living cherubs are fixed, like pinned butterflies, all in a rigid order. Besides the blue-sky heaven, where the angels fly, the mediæval artist had the clear and not unrealisable conception of a paradise like a garden in summer. Here his feeling expresses itself in sympathy with innocent enjoyment. The good are happy on green lawns, amidst trees and flowers and rills of limpid water. They enjoy conversation and music, perhaps even in the benign queenly presence of Our Lady herself. It is a fair, courtly life, full of pleasantness and intelligible for all, as it is, in fact, absolutely terrestrial.

But of all the manifestations of feeling in early Christian art none are clearer or more touching than those connected with death and the sorrow of survivors. In pictures where this kind of feeling is the dominant motive, it is often strong enough to overcome the tendency to what, for us, is slightly ludicrous in the *naïveté* of the uncritical ages. For example, there is a picture by Perugino at Florence representing Christ, after death, on the knees of the Virgin. It did not strike the painter that there is always some incongruity in placing one grown-up person on the knees of another. The infant Jesus is in his place on the Virgin's knee, and it requires little art to make him interesting there; but the grown-up Jesus, more than thirty

years old, is too large and heavy, as well as too manly, for such a situation. There are physical difficulties that Perugino had to overcome by making one person sustain the head and shoulders, and another the legs and feet. The consequence is, that the group looks as if it had been arranged to be photographed, and the more so that the Virgin, according to the simple and obvious composition of those days, is seated exactly under a central arch, whilst the two upright figures are against the pillars. Still no one but a most unfeeling critic could smile at Perugino's picture. The mother's grief is tearless and silent, but profound. This elderly woman is she who once held the child Jesus where now she holds the Man of Sorrows, her hand on the lifeless limb, her sad eyes gazing hopelessly on the insensible face. The human side of the painter's thought will check any critical levity.

There is a picture by John Bellini at Milan representing Christ after the Crucifixion, but resuscitated. In this picture a woman's hand tenderly holds that which the nail had pierced, and her face is brought close to that of Jesus, under the crown of thorns. Here, also, the sentiment is so genuine that the physical contact is felt to be no more than a natural expression of it. The picture is one that could have been composed only in an age when people were too simple-minded to have the fear of ridicule before their eyes. If such a work were to appear in a French *Salon* of the present day it would be immediately caricatured. I know exactly the sort of caricature that would be made of it.

The death and burial of the Virgin are in some respects better subjects for painting than those of Christ himself, as they may be supposed to have taken place under circumstances more within common experience. Even primitive artists could value such opportunities for awakening sympathy in the admirers of their works. They gave a pathetic interest to their figures by attitude chiefly. In expression they did not usually get much beyond the quieter and more permanent states of feeling. They could make a saint look pious, that being his habitual frame of mind, or they could make mourners look sad, because sadness is an expression that may last for hours or days, but they had not either the closeness of observation or the technical mastery necessary to catch and record subtle and transient states of feeling. Many primitive painters were thoroughly aware of the importance of the hands, and although seldom able to draw them really well—I mean as hands were studied and drawn by the accomplished men of a later time—they were by no means insensible to their beauty and refinement, or to the expression of character by their use. The privation of the study of the body which followed the subordination of art to ecclesiastical rule, left to it nothing of human beauty but the hands and face, so that the attention of artists was

concentrated upon them except when it wandered away into the endless details of ornamental dress. It may be that we are even more touched by expression in primitive art than by the same quality in that which is more advanced. The imperfect means at the disposal of the artist do undoubtedly lend a certain charm and interest to the qualities that he is able to display in spite of them. When a child, in our own day, plays a simple tune with feeling, we hear it with a peculiar pleasure. A skilled musician might infuse still more feeling into his consummate art, but we should think it was his craft and guile.

With regard to the use of the hands in mediæval art I may add that it has exercised some influence, not only on subsequent painting, but also on literature. Or perhaps the attention paid to the hands by writers may be an independent manifestation of the same taste, for we find it in mediæval authors. In the description of any beautiful maiden we are almost sure to observe that the hands have not been omitted. The reader remembers, of course, Matthew Arnold's exquisite description of Iseult of Brittany—

> "I know her by her mildness rare,
> Her snow-white hands, her golden hair."

I turn for a comparison to a genuine mediæval poem, *Méraugis*, composed by a *trouvère* in the thirteenth century. There I find an elaborate description of a maiden's beauty, and amongst other details these :—

> "Car la pucelle avoit le chef
> Mult bien assis et li chevoil
> Plus blonts que plume d'orioil.
> . . . . .
> Beles espaules et biaus bras
> Ot la pucele et blanches mains."[1]

Here you have both the golden hair and the white hands.

Rossetti, who was more under mediæval influences than Arnold, wrote one of his few Italian sonnets on a beautiful hand—

> "O bella mano, che ti lavi e piaci
> In quel medesmo tuo puro elemento
> Donde la Dea dell' amoroso avvento
> Nacque."

We have only to turn to Petrarch, to the sonnets about Laura's lost glove, and there we find a "bella mano" at least equally appreciated—

[1] "For the maiden's head was very well set, and her locks fairer than the feather of the golden oriole. Beautiful shoulders and fine arms had the maid, and white hands also."

"O bella man, che mi distringi'l 'core
E'n poco spazio la mia vita chiudi;
Man ov'ogni arte e tutti loro studi
Poser natura e'l Ciel per farsi onore."

And so on through three sonnets.

The influence of Christian art on the observation of the hand has not, however, been so much in the direction of beauty as in that of pathos and devotion. The thin hands of the martyr joined together in supplication when the flames are rising around his body, the hand of the bishop in the act of blessing, the laying of hands in confirmation or ordination, the joining of hands in marriage, are all closely associated with the history of Christian institutions. It is hardly too much to say that whilst the clothed parts of the body became of less and less importance in Christian art, so that at last they were wholly suppressed, and stiff vestments substituted for them, the hand gained what they had lost, and became a more and more important agent in expression.

CHAPTER VI

MATERIAL LUXURY IN MEDIÆVAL RELIGIOUS ART

EVERY kind of art has its special determining motive. There is always some particular reason for the production of a work of art. The delight in studying Nature has been, in our age, the predominant motive, but in the Middle Ages the study of Nature was not in itself an object of conscious pursuit. The production of ornament was kept much more consciously in view, and even this was but a means to an end. The great end and aim of mediæval art was to do honour to the personages of sacred history or legend.

That was the object of the mediæval artist, and now let us inquire into his means.

It is only a very advanced kind of art that can ever do honour to great personages by translating their dignity of station into the dignity of physical form. Primitive artists were debarred from this by their ignorance of form, and by their inability to idealise. They could not even draw nature as it is, which is the necessary qualification for drawing that more perfect grandeur or beauty which Nature constantly suggests but never realises. The study of the naked figure, that unique source of strength and knowledge for the figure-painter, had died out in the last decadence of classic art, and was not destined to any revival before the still distant future of the Italian Renascence. It would be unjust to deny to the mediæval painters all sense of natural dignity, or grace in attitude, or of nobility or sweetness in the expression of the countenance, but they hardly ever ventured to trust to these qualities as sufficient for the personages they desired to honour, and they almost invariably had recourse to richness of ornament in costume, and splendour of material surroundings. They were, in fact, though in a sense not generally accepted, materialists as all primitive people are materialists, by which I mean that their minds were unable to dissever moral from material grandeur. Their idea of expressing respect for the Virgin Mary

was to deck her person with the most elaborately wrought dresses and the costliest jewellery. This feeling for the necessity of costly splendour was so strong in mediæval artists that it quite overruled their respect for the historical truth of the Gospels. It is not easy to arrive at an exact and certain knowledge of their beliefs. It might be argued that the regalia of the Virgin and Child are purely symbolical, that the artists were clearly aware of the humble circumstances attending the miraculous birth, but that, transcending the truth of mere fact, they gave a visible embodiment to the higher truth of a sovereignty not visible at Nazareth. Or, again, it might be maintained that the regalia of the Virgin and Child are true in a prospective sense, that as in the belief of every Catholic she did really afterwards become the crowned Queen of Heaven, as Jesus became its Prince, the earthly diadem and royal robes are but anticipatory by a few years of the glory that was in reserve for them. It seems most probable that what may be called the regalia pictures of the Holy Family were at first simply suggested by the desire to do honour to the sacred personages, and that afterwards the pictures and images themselves may have produced some confusion of belief, like that curious anachronism by which the Saviour is sometimes represented as a Child in heaven, long after the Passion, and still worshipped by Catholic children as an ever infantine deity. The constant tendency in early art is to take the Holy Family out of poor surroundings, and to make its dwelling-place at least respectable according to mediæval ideas. This begins even before the birth of Christ, when the Virgin is frequently represented as a lady of quality living in a handsomely furnished if not luxurious apartment, and receiving the angel's visit with as much self-possession as if he were a nobleman paying a call. The simple-minded painters of those days thought they could not better manifest respect for the Virgin and her relations than by elevating them to the rank of gentlefolks; and a still more curious fact is that painters, who were by no means simple-minded, afterwards carried out the same principle in far more consummate art. When Rubens painted "The Education of the Virgin" he represented her as a young lady in satin with palatial surroundings, to satisfy that respect for a handsome style of living which is permanent in the human heart.

I have spoken of the materialism of early religious painting. If the reader is at all interested in this he may study it conveniently by observing the nimbus, or glory, behind or above the heads of sacred personages. In modern art this is either omitted or reduced to a thin oval ring of faint lambent light that hovers over the sacred head, and conveys by its very immateriality a far more powerful idea of the supernatural than anything

ponderable or tangible. If when some famous preacher is carrying his audience along with him by the power of genius and eloquence, that audience could see a faint ring of light forming itself in the air above his head, the hardest unbeliever amongst them would be thrilled and awestruck by such a manifestation of the supernatural. The very slightness of the manifestation would only add to its effect upon the mind. The sense of miracle would be as appalling as if a cathedral roof were lifted off and suspended in mid-air, whilst all present would know that the power displayed in that little thing was immeasurable and irresistible. If, however, we go back to early art we find in place of this the metallic materialism of goldsmith's work. Discs of ornamented metal are put behind or above the heads of the saints, and all that is miraculous about them is that they do not fall to the ground. Even this supernatural suspension is avoided by Francesco della Cossa in his "Annunciation" at Dresden, where the angel's nimbus is a golden disc very carefully riveted to a framework on his head. Cossa belonged to the fifteenth century, and the architecture in his picture, which is heavy and extremely elaborate, is a fanciful variety of the Italian Renascence, but the principle of materialism is the same in earlier Gothic work, I mean that the same degree of attention is bestowed upon the representation of tangible things.

The reader will not be able to enter fully into the spirit of early art if he does not bear in mind the close relationship that existed between all the arts before the time of Raphael. Architecture, wood-carving, and goldsmith's work were at that time much more nearly related to painting than they are now. Painting in the early times was little more than one of the ornamental arts, and it often made itself ornamental by simply appropriating the others. A picture becomes itself an ornamental object if only it represents things that already are so. If a collector removed a precious object from his room, and then, in the place of it, hung a picture accurately and elaborately representing it, the room would hardly look poorer than before. This is the explanation of much that strikes us as out of place in mediæval religious painting. For example, I am thinking of an Annunciation in which the Virgin is at her *prie-dieu* in a corner behind an open arcade of most elaborately carved oak. There were two reasons for this, one to do honour to the Virgin by representing her as a rich young lady, the other to make the picture ornamental by appropriating carver's work. There is a very well-known religious picture in the Louvre called "La Vierge au Donateur," soundly painted by Van Eyck, with the most elaborate finish. The picture gives an effect of the greatest decorative richness, and this is due to its annexation of several other decorative arts.

A gentleman (the Chancellor Rolin) is at his *prie-dieu*, his robe has a beautiful pattern. Opposite to him sits the Virgin in a long cloak with a broad border embroidered and set with jewels, whilst a little angel holds an elaborately jewelled crown above her head, and the Child upon her knee carries an orb surmounted by a jewelled cross. We have already, then, the two decorative arts of jewellery and embroidery, but in addition to these we have architecture in the beautiful building, carving in every capital of the marble columns, stained glass in the upper windows, and marble inlaying in the floor. Even the stool on which the Virgin is seated is ornamented with *marqueterie*, and the cushion is embroidered. All this ornamental work is finished as carefully as if the painter's only object had been an imitative study of still life. The truth is that he desired to make his picture beautiful as a mirror becomes beautiful when it reflects things that already are so.

The desire to introduce copies of jewellery and carving diminishes as the art of painting itself advances. They may, of course, be represented by accident in painting of the most advanced kind, but they are not sought for as a means of making it ornamental, and the most accomplished painters of the mature schools deal with such adjuncts slightly and rapidly, giving rather an idea of splendour than an exact inventory of the precious things that produce it. This, however, will be considered further on, at present it is enough to observe that early art attaches more importance to the jewelled embroidery of a robe than to the figure within it, a primitive state of feeling that still survives in many Roman Catholic churches, where the figure of the Virgin, as in the case of the Black Virgin at Dijon, is a shapeless wooden doll hidden beneath a dress as costly as that of a living queen. In some of the most elaborate Byzantine pictures the faces are drawn, and so are the hands and feet, but the bodies are simply omitted, and in place of them we have gaudily-coloured robes, as stiff as sheets of card-board, ornamented with formal patterns and imitations of jewellery.

So strong is the tendency towards ornament in all primitive art that the human face and body are themselves often made parts of an ornamental arrangement, and the truth of Nature is entirely subordinated to the desire for definite curves or positive and glaring colours. It is not a question of industry that presents itself here but a condition of mind. The amount of time spent by Irish monks in the illumination of manuscripts, or by Byzantine painters in the decoration of churches, would have been enough for their education in art of a higher order, but they reached the decorative stage, and their progress was arrested there.

The different arts are much nearer to each other in their early than in

their advanced stages, and they seem to part reluctantly, like loving members of one family when each has to go out on his own way into the world. This comparison may be carried further. The family of the Arts has a stepmother, the Church, and though she protected the peace of artists and sheltered them in tranquil cells from the storm and stress of barbaric life, she was narrow in her views and restrictive in her rule, and she held the artists, for long ages, in the bonds of sacerdotal exigencies. It was not permitted to them either to study freely or to produce spontaneously. There is nothing more pathetic than that long bondage in the history of the human mind. Most of the bondsmen would, no doubt, accept it unconsciously as a part of the natural order of things, and would neither regret the culture of a past which they had never known, nor long for the art of a future that they were unable to imagine; but there may have been amongst them spirits of a higher order, who chafed under the yoke of an iron conventionalism, and suffered in silence from that incompatibility between natural gifts and social conditions which is the torment of exquisite natures.

Which artist was it who first placed the Virgin on a high-backed throne with saints attending symmetrically on her right hand and her left? The compositions of that class are innumerable. In the Middle Ages every one of importance enough to hold a court sat upon a raised seat, usually with a high back to it, and in cases of great personages with a canopy over it. There are scenes in old miniatures and other illustrations of the Middle Ages representing audiences given by earthly potentates, and with a very little alteration these might be turned into religious pictures, with an enthroned Virgin or Christ, and saints for attendants. The composition is exactly the same, and the attitudes are just as solemn and stately in one case as in the other. In fact, mediæval religious art is scarcely more than a reflection of the more formal and stately human life of the period. The Virgin is a mediæval queen, the Child is a baby-prince, the saints answer to lords or chamberlains. To do as much honour as possible to the Virgin her throne was placed on a kind of high platform like a large box, with smaller boxes put before it as steps, an arrangement preserved in the Ansidei Raphael

CHAPTER VII

OF THE QUALITY CALLED "HOLINESS" IN ART

HOLINESS is supposed to be so generally understood that it is very rarely defined, and popular ideas on the subject are more comprehensive than exact. It is believed, for example, that holiness is moral excellence, yet certainly it must differ from moral excellence in some respects, since we all know men who are examples of the moral virtues yet who have not the slightest chance of winning a reputation for holiness, and who could never gain such a reputation even if they were to reach a superhuman degree of perfection in the kind of virtue that they practise.

Again, if we take examples of a splendid reputation for holiness, we are likely to find that this reputation is not due to the possession of ordinary virtues, such as industry and the performance of obscure duties to one's family, but that it has sometimes been accepted as a compensation for their absence, just as a certain laxity of another kind is forgiven in men of genius. St. Simeon Stylites performed no duties, he only committed slow suicide in a state of complete idleness, yet he had a prodigious renown for sanctity. He certainly would not have attained it by conscientiously keeping himself in good health that he might work for a wife and family. In modern times we have Labre, the French mendicant, who has already been beatified at Rome, and will be canonised in due course. Labre did nothing but wander from place to place, a kind of life which is known to be highly pleasurable for those who have the nomadic instinct. Whilst indulging himself in this respect, Labre avoided work and lived on charity. He had not the virtues of industry and cleanliness, he shirked the duties and declined the burdens of commonplace existence, but he developed a special genius for sanctity as an artist might develop a peculiar talent for art.

If St. Simeon Stylites and Labre had cultivated the commonplace virtues of obscure citizens we should never have heard their names.

There is another class of virtues, not commonplace, which lie so com-

pletely outside of holiness that they are never mentioned in connection with it. I mean the intellectual virtues, and especially that of unshrinking, unswerving labour in the application of the mental powers. Of this virtue we hear nothing in connection with holiness. It certainly does nothing to give a sanctified expression to the countenance. I was looking lately through a series of portraits of illustrious contemporaries who have been hard workers, and the observation occurred to me that not one of them had a saintly expression on his face. On further examination one reason for this appeared to be the intellectual keenness and sharpness of those faces, indicating great penetrating power and a delight in penetration, *but neither meekness nor reverence.* Then I looked at some ideal pictures of saints, and found that they never had this kind of acuteness, but always looked resigned, patient, and submissive. That very remarkable French painter and engraver, Gaillard, had himself the religious instinct in great strength, and when he represented St. Sebastian cruelly wounded by the arrow, he gave him no intellect in revolt against persecution. The saint looks upwards with a sad resignation, and were it not for the brightening of the countenance by a serene hope that sees beyond the earthly life now ending, the expression would be that of some poor dumb animal that seeks not any reason for its doom.

The idea of holiness, distinguishable, as we have seen, from moral and intellectual energy, is in reality that of special dedication to God. Thus, consecrated water is called "holy water," and consecrated ground is "holy ground," though the water and the ground are passive. The orders of the Church are called "holy orders," because there is a service of dedication, but nobody thinks of calling the medical profession a sacred profession, though its object is the alleviation of suffering.

If we apply this to the fine arts, we perceive that art may be intellectually or morally powerful without being holy, and that the especially sacred element in the fine arts is *dedication.* In other words, a picture is not strictly a religious picture unless the artist has conveyed the idea of a special dedication to God.

The difficulty of conveying this idea increases with the progress of culture. In primitive art nothing can be easier; it is, in fact, simply a traditional and mechanical process. The saints are painted in devotional attitudes, with rings or discs of imponderable golden glory floating behind their heads; with these indications, and a proper degree of seriousness in the expression, the artist's task is accomplished. He has produced a work of sacred art by an exercise of technical skill in accordance with certain rules or traditions.

ST. MONICA AND ST. AUGUSTINE

PAINTED BY ARY SCHEFFER

ENGRAVED IN LINE BY A. DIDIER

(*Louvre*)

ARY SCHEFFER belongs to the French school by his education and residence in Paris, but he was of German origin on his father's side and of Dutch on his mother's.

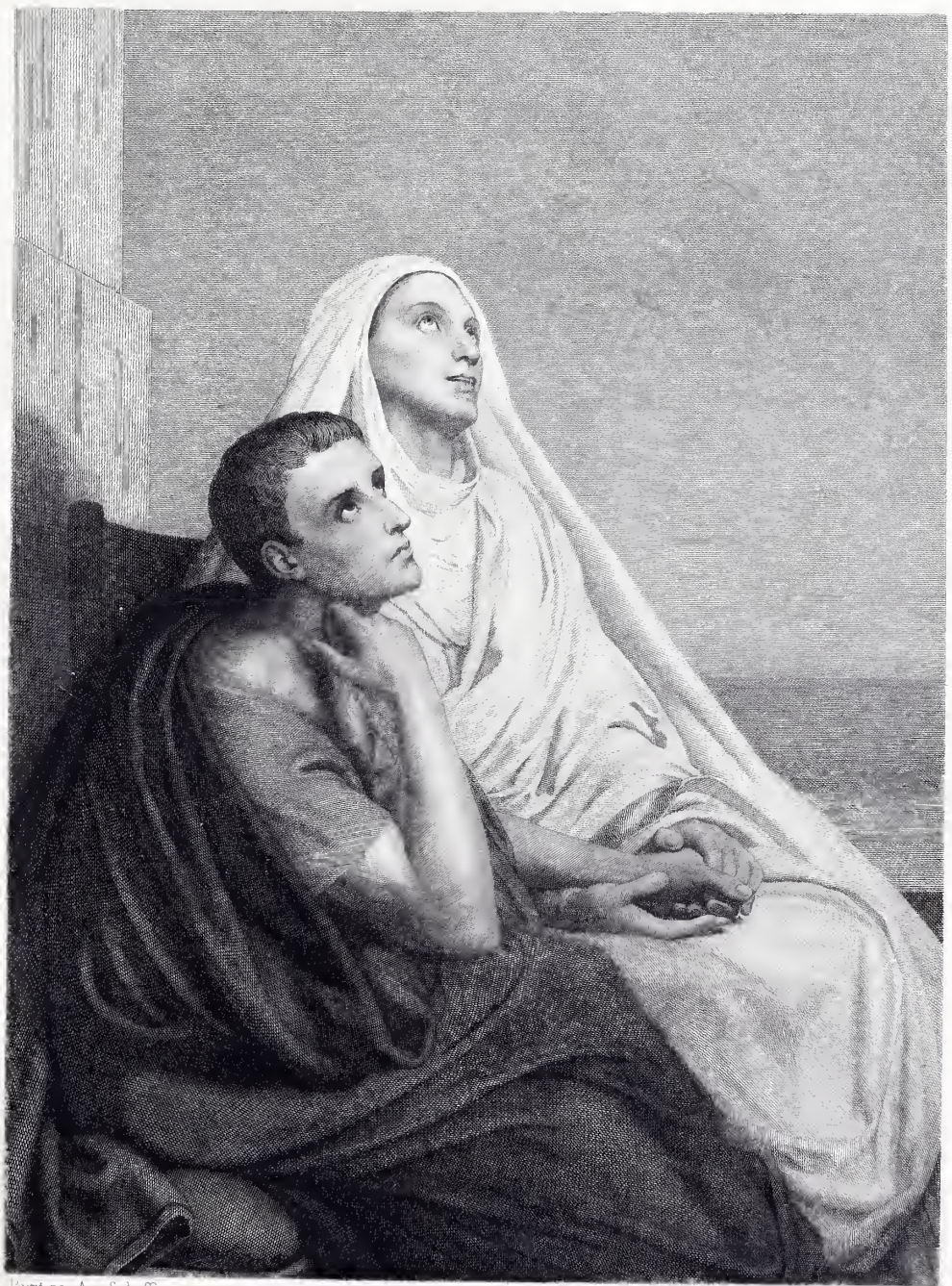
His fame, at one time great, diminished after his death, when it became evident that he was inferior to many other modern painters in the technical qualities of colour, texture, and handling.

For translation into line-engraving the absence of these qualities is of no importance, as the colour is reduced to black and white, whilst the texture and handling become those of the engraver.

What Scheffer certainly had was an elevated sentiment which engraving preserves. The universal acceptance of this picture amongst religious people proves that he understood their sentiments. I am not sure that his own religion was more than a devotion to duty along with habits of industry and generosity, and I believe that this is one of those cases where a man of high principles and tender feelings may *imagine* the religious sentiment and sympathise with it sufficiently for the purposes of art. The case is not that of Angelico.

The picture belongs to the year 1846, when Scheffer was fifty-one years old.

The engraving is a first-rate example of contemporary French line-engraving.



Peint par Ary Scheffer

Imp. Wittmann

Gravé par Didier

Originality of thought is not required for a task of this kind, neither is any genuineness of feeling.

As culture advances, people become able to detect manufacture in religious art, and they become dissatisfied with it. The field of religious art is more and more restricted by the development of the critical intelligence, until finally the idea of holiness in art is attached almost exclusively to the pious expression of faces.

Serenity, submission, resignation, patience, hope, faith sustaining the weak body rather than energy animating the strong one, these are the resources of sacred art in times like ours, when costume and external symbols have lost so much of their efficacity.

The most successful of modern religious pictures that I remember is the well-known St. Monica and St. Augustine of Ary Scheffer, now in the Louvre. The first thing that strikes a critic in that profoundly harmonious composition is that the present world, the terrestrial prison of the saint, is almost completely excluded. Hardly anything of it is visible. The figures are seated with their backs towards a plain wall, and close to a stone parapet. There is nothing solid near them but this upright and horizontal masonry, which is intentionally made as simple as that of a prison. Beyond the parapet nothing is visible but the sea, stretching away to the far horizon, and above the sea is the blue sky, cloudless up to the zenith. Here what there is of the substantial world is made as unattractive as possible, and the escape to the infinite is twice suggested. We are therefore already half-way out of the prison-house of earth. The costume of the figures is as simple as the masonry of the walls; they are burdened neither with jewellery nor embroidery, they have neither mundane nor ecclesiastical vanities. The date of the subject conveniently delivers the artist from the embarrassment of modern dress. Having thus got rid of everything worldly, he concentrates his whole force on attitude and expression, and his great endeavour has been to convey the idea of *looking out of the world, beyond the present life.* The expression of this idea is powerfully aided by the evidently feeble health of St. Monica, and by the clinging of St. Augustine to her hand in filial affection, though he, too, is gazing on the infinite beyond.

I take this as a completely successful solution of the modern difficulty in the representation of holiness without any of the facile devices of the Middle Ages. Here we have nothing of the conventional dressing out of sanctity, nor is the supernatural brought nearer to us or made visible by any angelic presence in the sky. The power of the picture as an illustration of holiness lies entirely in the expression of two human faces,

especially in that of St. Monica. For her the temporal life lies already behind; it belongs to the past, and the eternal is opening before. Mother and son are saddened by the approaching separation. She must leave him to go through the work of his great life without her sustaining tenderness, but in the midst of their sadness at parting is a serenity deeper than that of the tranquil waters before them and the cloudless azure wherein, with wistful eyes, they seem to be seeking God.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ARCHAIC ELEMENT IN SACRED ART

THE archaic element is of great importance in sacred art of all kinds. The only modern costumes admissible in a sacred picture are those which are at the same time ancient, like the vestments of the Roman Church. The parallel difficulty in literature is in the use of modern words. "Thus saith" appears a holier expression than "so says." "Unto thee" suggests an idea of sanctity not at all conveyed by "to you." A holy personage could scarcely be spoken of as a botanist or a zoologist; the words are too modern. If it were necessary to speak of such a personage as possessing botanical or zoological knowledge, a periphrase would be used, such as, "he spake of trees," "he spake also of beasts." This is the great advantage (in the English language) of poetry over prose in dealing with the subject of holiness. Tennyson could write about "The Holy Grail" in verse, admitting archaic expressions with the assumed simplicity of mind that may be supposed to accompany them, whereas the treatment of such a subject in modern English prose would have presented insuperable difficulties.

The natural harmony that exists between archaism and religion may be understood when we reflect that no *august* religion, no religion that has a grandeur sufficiently imposing for the purposes of art, can ever be a new religion. If it is not old, it is not yet apparently venerable. In every country where a civilisation is sufficiently established for the purposes of art, a new religion (supposing it able to arise in spite of the crushing opposition it would certainly encounter) would come as an intruder upon an ancient civilisation. It would be rejected by the upper classes, as the upper classes of the Roman Empire despised and rejected Christianity. Only after making its way amongst the poor could the new doctrine slowly and gradually overcome the inertia of custom, and establish itself as a fashionable creed. By the time that the best artists found it worth while

to devote themselves to its illustration, the religion would be already old. The want of poetry in a new religion is fatal to its artistic interest. Painters do not illustrate Mormonism, and their abstinence is not due to their want of belief in the Mormon doctrine, for they have not any greater belief in the Greek mythology which they illustrate every day.

A remarkable proof of the artistic importance of antiquity in religion is the continued predominance of Roman Catholicism in poetry and painting, even in countries where Protestant forms of worship have been for some time established. The poet and the painter have usually, so far as their artistic moods are concerned, an affinity with Roman Catholicism amounting to a kind of imaginative faith. The antiquity of Protestant *doctrine* is not in question. Art and imaginative literature have little concern with theological controversy—it is external and visible custom which chiefly concerns them; and it is simply true that Roman Catholic ceremonies, besides being more picturesque than Protestant ceremonies, take us back directly to the Middle Ages, and even to the half-fabulous times of chivalry in which every imaginative mind has wandered, at least in the dreams of youth. They have the same charm for the poet and the painter that an old castle has for every American. Besides that, these ceremonies have the advantage of harmonising completely with what is left to us of the mediæval arts, and especially with the magnificent architecture of the age of faith. At Amiens all holds together, the building and the sacerdotal functions; at Westminster the building impresses by its age, but the services belong to a later time.

Still, even in illustrating the services of the Church of England, an artist seldom fails to be archaic so far as the opportunity allows. Many readers will remember a print of three choristers singing which was, in its day, the most popular of Anglican works of art. Even in this, although the choristers themselves were of the nineteenth century, the ornaments of the desk were mediæval, and so was the lettering of the title. And when the progress of ritualism encouraged a revival of the arts in connection with the Anglican services, the forms adopted were invariably archaic. This answered to a want of the religious mind which desired to surround itself, in service-time, with objects remote enough from modern life to have a religious aspect. It is for the same reason that most people consider Gothic architecture especially suitable for churches. From the simply rational point of view, it would be difficult to select a style so ill-adapted for the practical needs of a preacher. He ought to be heard, yet the acoustic properties are bad; he ought to be seen, but pillars hide him from half the congregation. If the windows are filled with stained glass, there is not

ST. ANTHONY AND ST. GEORGE

PAINTED BY VITTORE PISANO

REPRODUCED IN PHOTOGRAVURE BY BOUSSOD AND VALADON

(National Gallery)

THE original is a small tempera picture on wood. It belongs to the first half of the fifteenth century, and is a good example of the kind of excellence that the painters of northern Italy were then aiming at. The art is primitive in principle, valuing clear detail more than visual truth, but it is interesting, and has a certain distinction.

The vision of the Virgin and Child in the sky seems to have been given in by the painter as a kind of second and independent work, for neither of the two saints pays the slightest attention to it.

I chose this picture partly for the costumes. That of the knight is curious and very beautifully represented. It could not have a better foil than the dark and simple dress of the hermit saint. I thought it desirable to have at least one representation of armour in the volume.

This is a good example of the unhesitating way in which the early masters altered the scale of things for pictorial convenience. To get the formidable dragon into the picture Pisano reduced him to the size of a large bird. This would be done, as in heraldry, without really intending to affirm anything about dimensions. The dragon is only there to remind us of St. George's principal exploit.

Photogravure Lemercier - Paris

light enough for old people to read their prayer-books. The style is the most expensive of all styles in proportion to the accommodation, and it is not durable. Surely these are weighty objections, yet public feeling takes no account of them. It loves and values the archaic influence too much, it prizes above all practical convenience the association with the poetry of the past.

CHAPTER IX

THE INCOMPATIBILITY BETWEEN REALISM AND RELIGION

THERE is a misunderstanding in modern times about the application of realistic principles to religious art from which earlier ages were happily preserved by their own intellectual simplicity. Not having any clear and accurate conception of fact, being destitute of that analytical power that separates fact from fiction, having no word in their language corresponding to "ideal," "idealise," "idealisation," the men of the Middle Ages were neither resolutely scientific nor consciously poetical as we are. They could idealise without knowing that they idealised, and they could mingle fact and fiction together with the easiest unconsciousness. There was no faculty in their minds that could perceive any objection to an anachronism, and they had not a word to express it. They were not shocked, as we are, by incongruity; they fell into it innocently, and when they avoided it their escape was due rather to healthy instincts than to reflection. In a word, their minds had free play between truth and error in regard to fact and between curiously minute realism on the one hand and a sublime idealism on the other, whilst they were ready to believe equally in both.

The condition of mind prevalent in the upper classes during the Middle Ages may still be understood by observing an uneducated peasantry. My own experience has been that I could explain many things to a shrewd and intelligent yet untaught man provided that I remained strictly in the region of fact, but that it is quite impossible to make him comprehend the action of the mind in idealisation. He can understand *invention* in a lie or a tale when the invention is made to resemble truth as closely as possible, but the elevating and beautifying action of the mind is unintelligible for him. Well, this may throw some light on a great question concerning religious art. We must bear in mind that a religion is and must be a great popular institution. A philosophy may be the property of a small intellectual *élite*;

a religion must be popular or it will be unrecognisable as a religion. This being so, it must follow that if there has been any process of idealisation in the making of the religion itself, that process must remain unintelligible for the people, although they unconsciously accept the results of it. What the people always do in such cases is to accept the ideal as a hard fact until they begin to think that it is not a fact, after which they reject it angrily as an imposture; they are incapable of accepting the ideal as an ideal only, and quite incapable of perceiving that the ideal may do good service in elevating the mind and purifying life long after it has ceased to claim any qualities but its own. The popular notion of a believed religion is that it is a collection of facts on the principle of accurate newspaper reporting, and the popular notion of a religion no longer believed is that it is a parcel of lies, like the wilful inventions of a false witness. The popular tendency, therefore, with regard to religious art, will naturally be to associate willingly a matter-of-fact kind of art with a religion that is believed, and to look upon the illustration of religions no longer believed as a kind of fiction in which truth is a matter of indifference. The notion of the ideal will be equally absent from the popular estimate in both cases.

This refers to the popular tendency in an age like our own when the increase of consciousness has led to a steadily increasing sharpness of separation between fact and that which is not fact. It is not that we have discarded imagination, on the contrary, the most imaginative artists are still the most successful. The head of English literature in the nineteenth century is incomparably more imaginative than the pedestrian versifiers of the eighteenth. Amongst musical composers the most imaginative hold the highest rank. The most poetical of English landscape-painters occupies an unapproachable throne. Even in society and politics whatever strikes the imagination has in it a vitality, a chance of success, that is wanting to dull men, however meritorious, and to uninteresting measures, however beneficial. Still, the separation between the matter-of-fact and the imaginative is becoming clearer and clearer in our consciousness. We are beginning to be aware, for example, that the peculiar function of royalty, that function for which it is so much better adapted than any substitute that has yet been found for it, is to strike the imagination effectually, and that its costly and complicated machinery of palaces, yachts, state-carriages, diamonds, is a kind of realised poetry like an acted story of the Arabian Nights. Monarchy is in this respect better understood than religion. The terrible matter-of-fact spirit, with its rudely literal way of interpreting everything, takes possession of some beautiful belief that grew naturally from human sentiment and imagination in earlier ages, and thinks that it belongs to the

commonplace world of fact when it ought to be attributed to the need of the ideal. It is this spirit which misunderstands the relation between religion and the fine arts. It does not see that religion belongs to the ideal, that each religion is an aspiration having a very close affinity with ideal art both in painting and sculpture, and a still closer affinity with music, but no affinity with such a literal art as photography, for example, or with painting that is like photography.

It follows from this that when tangible objects, such as agricultural implements, are introduced in religious pictures, it is always prudent to avoid too complete a degree of realisation. They may be drawn accurately as to general form, but with a certain intentional simplicity and severity, refusing that kind of finish which brings objects into the common world. Puvis de Chavannes has thoroughly understood this. In his great mural compositions no object is ever realised, everything is treated with the distinct intention of avoiding the matter-of-fact and the actual, so that the imagination of the spectator is free to leave the contemporary world and to dwell vaguely in some distant primeval time.

CHAPTER X

ON TRUTH TO FACT IN THE ILLUSTRATION OF THE BIBLE

THE modern love of accuracy in matters of fact, and an almost complete loss of the child-like uncritical credulity of earlier ages, have led some artists of the nineteenth century to undertake the illustration of the Old and New Testament, or of passages in them, on the principle of close attention to every fact that could be positively ascertained. For example, the light and scenery of Palestine may still be studied from nature, and even the forms of hill and valley have been but little altered; the ethnological characteristics of the inhabitants are believed to have been persistent, or nearly so, and we are told that much in the rural life of Palestine is still almost what it was when Isaac met Rebecca at the well. The attempt to resuscitate the biblical past has therefore been made by many travelling artists of different European nationalities, and there was at one time a certain enthusiasm for this kind of fidelity, but this enthusiasm cooled for the following reasons.

The truth could be given with considerable accuracy in some things of minor importance, such as the geological character of the country or its flora; but in a much more important matter, the portraiture of personages, the truth was not ascertainable. We have not one authentic portrait of a single biblical personage from Adam and Eve down to the preaching apostles. St. Paul travelled in countries where the art of sculpture was understood, but no marble has perpetuated his features. Of Jesus a conventional type-portrait has been evolved in the course of time. The face wears a short beard, the hair is long and parted in the middle, the features are regular, the expression serious and benign. But the conception of Christ took shape in the imagination of men long after the death of all who had looked upon the living face. The first Jesus in the fine arts is utterly different from that. He is a young man with a classical face, and the chin is beardless.

The poverty of materials is not limited to the absence of graphic design. The simple kind of literary composition that was natural to the writers of the Bible took it for granted that a name stands effectually for a person. The modern literary artist, whether historian, poet, or novelist, is well aware that a name in itself is nothing unless it can be attached to something like a living image. The art of describing men and women in written portraiture was carried to the extreme of minutely observant skill long before the present day, as we see in the self-portraiture of Larochefoucauld. There are descriptions so accurate and so well done that they almost replace painting. We search in vain for descriptions of this kind in the plain language of the New Testament or the burning sentences of the prophets.

Now, although the historian may substitute a name for a human being, the painter cannot substitute shapelessness for shape. He is, therefore, in the absence of graphic documents, compelled to draw from imagination or, worse still, from some living model, a difficulty that may well give rise, as it did in the case of Lionardo, to the greatest anxiety about the adequacy of his conception or the fitness of his choice.

Beyond this difficulty lies another connected with the pictorial suitableness of subjects. An artist who painted for historic truth would endeavour to represent events as they actually took place. If he did this, the result might be called a painting, but it would seldom, if ever, be a picture. Composition, though it may be craftily hidden, is always necessary to a picture. The entire absence of composition, with the manifest awkwardness which that deficiency produces, is now plainly seen in instantaneous photographs, which demonstrate, better than any quantity of lecturing, that composition is not a luxury for the eye, but a necessity for the satisfaction of the mind.

To compare nature and art, let us imagine what would happen if a miracle were to be really performed in a public place. There would be a dense and excited crowd attracted already by the mere presence of the miracle-worker. He and the subject of his power would be hidden in the very centre of the crowd, and hemmed round as closely as possible. The few who really saw the effect of the miracle would have their backs turned to us, and the gathered multitude, ring beyond ring, would be eagerly trying to peer over their shoulders. The painter disposed to paint the exact truth might study the backs of the outsiders. This may be an extreme case; yet if the reader will quietly think out for himself how incidents most probably *did* happen he will rarely find that they happened conveniently for artistic treatment. Excited people do *not* put themselves in the positions which least interfere with the sight of what is going forward. This is done on the stage, it is not done in life.

From the historical and religious point of view it might have been interesting to represent biblical personages exactly as they lived, but it is probably an advantage for art that their real forms and features are unknown. The nobility of a man's character does not in real life manifest itself by physical dignity; and yet, as art can only deal with those qualities that can be made externally visible, the painter needs physical dignity as the symbol of that which is purely moral. It is fortunate for him, *as artist*, that he should be free to choose his own physical types. The real body does *not* represent the mind. It is difficult, if not impossible, to believe on seeing a faithful portrait of Turner that within that form and behind that countenance dwelt a mind as poetical as Shelley's and as refined, in art at least, as that of Raphael. On the other hand, one who studied the refined features of the great Napoleon might perhaps guess that he was pitiless, but would never imagine that he was vulgar.

CHAPTER XI

RAPHAEL'S PRINCIPLE IN BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATION

THE first characteristic of Raphael's work is negative. He paid no attention to local truth. He made no attempt to imitate oriental colour and light, or to paint oriental places. His personages are Europeans, such as he was accustomed to see in Italy; their costume is what was most convenient for the arrangement of draperies; his architecture is fancy architecture of his own; his Athens is not Athens; his Jerusalem is not Jerusalem; his Sea of Galilee has Italian shores.

From the historical or the archæological point of view it is easy to find fault with inaccuracy of this kind, but it may be effectually defended. Think of the impression on Raphael's contemporaries! No artist of that time *could* paint the East. The orientals themselves had no painters; the Europeans were too unfamiliar with oriental nature to paint it with any truth. Let us suppose, however, for the sake of argument, that Raphael had known the East as John Lewis knew it, and that he had painted it as accurately. Nobody would have understood him. The effect of the unfamiliar in art is not to please and to charm, but to shock, surprise, awaken question and protest. It requires a whole education to lead the mind up to the acceptance of exotic things in art. Raphael took art as he found it, advanced it in some respects, but not so far as to get beyond the range of his public, and therefore remained truly an artist. If ever he became an experimentalist and discoverer, it was strictly within artistic limits. Instead of the shock of doubt and surprise he gave nothing but pure satisfaction, not in the least disturbing either the æsthetic prejudices or the religious contentment of the believers of his time.

To illustrate a great religion which claims to be universal is not the same thing as to give a traveller's description of a province. Even in our own day the local veracities of realism in the representation of the life of Christ are offensive to Catholic sentiment; yet this same Catholic

sentiment, tender as it is and so ready to feel a wound, is not offended in the least by the manifest untruth of those representations that appear to honour the Virgin by excessive and unsuitable ornaments.

Raphael paid homage, in his own way, to the great personages of religion, and that his way was intelligently chosen is proved by the eagerness with which it was accepted by one of the ablest of the Popes. Being gifted with consummate sense and tact, Raphael perceived that a Church at the very summit of worldly grandeur and authority would desire to see her origin ennobled, and his manner of achieving this object was characteristic of a cultivated mind. In the maturity of his art he rose far above the barbarous device of giving dignity by mere costliness of dress. He made his personages themselves dignified, and he possessed, in an extraordinary degree, the art of heightening their dignity by situation. The only objection to these artifices is that they are too obvious. Well, they are visible enough to an artist or to any competent critic, but they are not visible to the public which they subjugate. They are a part of artist-craft, as the elevation of the priest on the steps of the altar is of priest-craft. The common people do not think "those steps have been placed there to give the priest an advantageous situation," nor are they aware of the skill with which Raphael subordinates minor personages to St. Paul. Nobody in Raphael's time would have accused him of unfaithfulness to truth, but if anybody had told him that St. Paul had a mean appearance, he might have answered that a mean appearance could only convey a false impression of the most powerful of the Apostles, and that, as painting is compelled to interpret the invisible by the visible, an artist had no resource but to lend an apparent grandeur. This was Raphael's principle, acted upon without hesitation in the cartoons of "The Sacrifice at Lystra" and "Paul Preaching at Athens." In both these compositions the figure of Paul is made larger and more imposing than the others, and its stature is additionally heightened by placing it upon one step in the first and three steps in the second. Another very skilful and less obvious artifice is the introduction of the boys with the little altar in the Lystra cartoon. They are standing on the ground and close to Paul, who thus, by contrast, is made to appear gigantic. The nearer foreground figures, that might otherwise become dangerous as rivals, are, in both cartoons, made either to kneel or to bend.

The cartoon of "The Rebuke of Elymas" attains the same object in another way. Here it was impossible to elevate Paul artificially on steps, as the highest place had to be given to the Pro-Consul, who is placed without hesitation on a central throne standing upon a carved and inscribed

pedestal. Paul is therefore put quite in the foreground—in fact so much in the foreground that his feet almost stand upon the base-line of the picture, an arrangement that would be condemned as a fault in a modern artist. The perspective alone is enough to make him gigantic, and the effect is further increased by the short stature of Elymas, and by his bending attitude as he stretches forth his hands. In the cartoon of "The Death of Ananias" the arrangement is reversed. Here Peter is in the second plane, like the Pro-Consul, and the inferior persons are in the foreground, but Peter stands on a platform, and the entire composition is arranged to give him the utmost importance, whilst the foreground figures are all bending or kneeling, and Ananias has already fallen in the throes of death.

In the cartoon of "The Charge to Peter" we have the same subordination of inferior personages to the principal figure, but it is attained in another way. Jesus is set apart and is made more important by the sheep immediately behind him. The nearest Apostle is made to kneel, one or two others bend forward, the rest are massed in a group to deprive them of individual importance. Jesus himself exhibits the arm and shoulder of a Hercules, which is a translation of moral authority into physical power.

In these cartoons, as in all other compositions by Raphael, the realisation of the incident as it actually occurred is quite outside of his intentions. Probably he never once thought of inquiring how an incident was most likely to have happened; certainly he cannot have believed that in moments of intense excitement people would take care to place themselves in the most effective scenic order, with draperies gracefully arranged. Was he, then, indifferent to truth? The answer is, that to historical and visible truth he was indifferent to a degree that we can hardly realise in these days, but that he paid great attention to truth of another kind. His religious personages belong to a triumphant rather than a nascent and despised religion; they are true to the fulness rather than to the beginning of religious history. Raphael's Apostles, with their grand manners and noble gestures, are predecessors that the Vatican might acknowledge. There is a kind of truth in investing the past with something of that dignity which the subsequent course of events has given to it.

In our day we may see in Raphael too much of the religious painter, because most of his subjects were religious. He was, in fact, a fashionable court painter in an exceptional position. The Court that he served was theocratic. Its King was mysterious and invisible, but represented by a magnificent Viceroy. Its Queen, whom Raphael painted continually, was no longer upon earth, and had not been seen, save in dream or vision, for

nearly fifteen hundred years. Its Prince was an ideal Child, long since grown up to manhood and cruelly put to death. The great personages of this royal court were apostles and saints, equally beyond the range of a painter's study and observation. And yet the courtly aspect of all visible surroundings, and the courtly ideas, were maintained in their full strength by the living and present Viceroy. What wonder, then, if a great stateliness and decorum should have marked all the religious conceptions of a painter in such a situation? He enjoys the full favour of God's Vicegerent, and so feels himself nearer than other artists to the splendours of the heavenly throne. The great "Disputa" fresco, which represents theologians arguing about the Eucharist, was for this court painter a subject as much within his business as a coronation picture for some English Royal Academician.

The religious art of Raphael is popular mainly in his Madonnas. The interest here is human rather than theological. The secret of Raphael's success in comparison with that of his predecessors is his combination of the human sympathy which awakens interest with the ideal grace and charm which excite admiration and give rarity and distinction to a work. All simple and unsophisticated minds must of necessity fall into a harmless illusion about the Madonnas of Raphael. The art is so well concealed, the attitude and expression always so natural, that nature seems entirely predominant; yet it is not so; it is art which is predominant in every curve, and it is exactly this artistic element that raises the work into that region of the ideal where art and religion are very easily confounded. It is in this artistic element that the religious sentiment unconsciously finds its account. This is one of those cases, more numerous than is generally supposed, in which artistic idealisation, not being in itself intelligible by the ordinary public, is supposed to have a religious character. What is elevating and impressive in architecture and music is at once taken to be religious if it is only associated with pious feelings by the adoption of some scriptural or saintly title. In like manner an idealised picture of any well-chosen model becomes a Madonna simply by being called so.

The justification of Raphael lies here, in the ideal character of religion itself; but the subject is very difficult to discuss, because all ordinary minds take religion literally, and either accept it as a plain matter of fact or else reject it in the same spirit as if it could not be of any use unless its narratives were accurate like the best newspaper reporting. A few understand that both religion and art belong to the region of the ideal, and that their elevating power is due to their not being matter-of-fact as science and business are. Seen in this light such compositions as the cartoons of Raphael, his Virgins, and his biblical illustrations generally, are, if not

exactly religious, at least very nearly related to religion. They are much more nearly related to it than crude realism ever can be. We do not know whether Raphael himself was religious or not, or to what degree. It is very difficult for us in these days to understand the religion of the Italian Renascence, which embarrasses us by its toleration of worldliness and immorality. Raphael was a man of the world and he kept a mistress; but whilst indulging so far in the laxity which the age allowed and the Church tolerated, he may still have been a sincere believer in the divinity of Christ and in the august mission of the Apostles. The one principle that Raphael followed in representing them was to invest them with the utmost conceivable dignity, not by the childish device of material magnificence, which can never be more than an adjunct, but by making that dignity their own.

CHAPTER XII

THE INFLUENCE OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM ON RELIGIOUS ART

THE vast production of works of art, which for many centuries has been encouraged by the Church of Rome, has given an impression that she is favourable to the fine arts. A close acquaintance with Roman Catholic countries, and a careful observation of the employment of the fine arts for religious purposes, whether in churches or in private houses, leads rather to the following conclusions.

The Church of Rome is eminently favourable to the production of *quantity* in religious art. Under her auspices there is a vast and incessant production of religious images and pictures. The sacerdotal encouragement of the fine arts does not, in itself, go beyond quantity, but as the quantity is enormous, it includes good work as well as bad, and therefore, in this sense, but, not in any other, it may be said that the Church of Rome is the patroness of excellence in art.

Her influence on religious art may be compared with that of the general demand on secular. It is so comprehensive, it includes so much, that good art gets a chance almost proportionate to the production of it in the world. At the same time, the influence of the Church of Rome is distinctly unfavourable to the *improvement* of art, because it is undiscerning. She is as impartial as Nature herself, who permits good painting and bad with equal indifference. And as Nature neither protects good works of art by any special interference for their preservation, nor yet destroys them with any spite of vandalism, so the Church of Rome is at the same time an inefficient conservator, and yet free from the reproach of iconoclasm. Pictures are admitted into continental churches, but they are treated with remarkable indifference. They are often hung in situations where it is impossible that they should ever be seen; their frames are left without regilding, and the canvases abandoned to dinginess and dirt. If the work is an altar-piece, tall candlesticks are likely to be placed before it so as to impede the view,

and the smoke of the candles may blacken the painting in time. In the same building with one of the world's master-pieces may be hung in equal honour or equal neglect a collection of things that would discourage a country auctioneer. It is with painting as with sculpture and architecture, they are matters of necessity in the Church of Rome, and not of choice or taste. She takes the good and the bad together, and finds a use for all. The statues of her saints may be from the chisel of a Michael Angelo, or they may be cheap and gaudy images from the shop of some insignificant tradesman. In the present day she is ready to accept the most cultured art of Paris and the mechanically manufactured pictures for the *chemins de croix.*

I have always thought it characteristic of the Church of Rome that she should first have ordered the "Last Supper" of Lionardo da Vinci, and afterwards failed to preserve it. No doubt it was an extreme instance of indifference when the prior of the Dominicans cut a doorway through that picture and amputated the feet of Jesus, but the act was Roman Catholic in this double sense, that there was neither hostility to the work of art nor any care for its preservation. The monks wanted a door there, and made a hole accordingly; they did not destroy from hostility like the soldiers of Cromwell or the men of the French revolution. When Napoleon's legionaries stabled their horses in the refectory it is said that, in a spirit of rough jesting, they threw bricks at the heads of the Apostles. Monk or priest would never have done that, but he would have allowed, and in this case actually *did* allow, any common bungler to paint over them.

It is a delicate and difficult business to define superstition. We all use the word to describe beliefs in the action of supernatural powers which are held by others, never by ourselves. Amongst these beliefs which to me appear superstitious because I do not share them, is that which attributes magical or miraculous virtues to particular images and pictures. It is probable that most of my readers agree with me in looking upon beliefs of this nature as pure illusions of the imagination, yet they are very prevalent in the Church of Rome, though many Roman Catholics are as superior to them as we ourselves can be. I mention them in this place only to observe that so far from being an encouragement to excellence in the fine arts, they act in a contrary direction by investing with the superiority of sanctity, works that may be destitute of art.

The case closely resembles that of a special reputation for sanctity in men which has often elevated useless ascetics of a low type of intelligence, and with small energy in action, to a kind of sacred eminence that seems to place them far above the most valuable servants of mankind. Both in

THE VIRGIN AND CHILD, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, AND AN ANGEL

PAINTED BY ALESSANDRO BOTTICELLI

REPRODUCED IN PHOTOGRAVURE BY BOUSSOD AND VALADON

(*National Gallery*)

THIS picture is in tempera, on wood.

It was selected for various reasons, first, as a very perfect study of expression both in the abstracted meditative look of the Virgin, who seems absorbed in thoughts of the future, and then in the tender reverence of the angel, and the humble, affectionate adoration of St. John. It serves also as an illustration of healthy infancy and the most innocent maidenhood.

Technically, the picture belongs to the early schools of purely linear design and patient representation of detail, but it is relatively advanced art; this is proved by the full and well-studied modelling.

Photogravure Goupil - Paris

the cases of the famous saint and the miraculous idol an adventitious quality is supposed to exist which gives them place and permanence by lifting them above the region of rational comparisons.

A miraculous image is a plague to the eyes for ever. It outlasts the generations of mankind. No potentate dares to destroy a thing that the people believe to be miraculous. Such objects are uniformly bad as works of art; some of them are hideous dolls, such, for example, as the Black Virgin at Dijon, which is preserved in honour, clothed with cloth of gold, adorned with a Byzantine superabundance of jewellery, and treated, from age to age, as if she were conscious of her greatness.

The present influence of the Church of Rome is strong in private habitations. She disseminates immense quantities of holy images which, without being reputed miraculous, are still venerated for their subjects though generally valueless as art. In like manner the clergy spread abroad millions of engravings both separately and as illustrations to devotional literature. The prevailing tendency in art of this class is always towards an unmeaning smoothness of execution in the figures. The faces show little individuality of expression, but have a pious air either in the beatitude of the accepted saint or the patience of the suffering martyr. Much labour is bestowed on the execution of elaborate ornamental borders, a practice that has come down from the decorated manuscripts of the Middle Ages. It seems difficult to believe that these feeble productions, which are beneath all serious criticism, can be encouraged by the same great Church which employed and appreciated Michael Angelo, and yet this contrast is only one of many examples of the all-embracing comprehensiveness of that prodigious institution which accepts and utilises everything that can extend her influence. The frescoes of the Sixtine are not more elevated above the common *imagerie religieuse* than the serious architecture of a great cathedral above the tawdry vulgarity of some new and cheap rustic church.

The case may be better understood by comparison with another which at first sight seems very different from it. The Protestant Churches give little encouragement to the graphic and plastic arts, but they make great use of literature, and they accept the services of able and inferior writers indiscriminately when both are equally useful in doing good from the religious point of view. If we were asked whether the Protestant Churches were favourable to literature, or not, the answer would be that they are certainly favourable, yet not by selection or by any special encouragement of literary excellence, but simply because amongst such enormous masses of published matter there will always be found the natural proportion of talent, and even of genius. It is only in this very general sense that the

Church of Rome can now be said to be a nursing mother of art. Her great Popes of the Renascence were men of exceptional gifts and attainments that no ecclesiastical rank, however elevated, could of itself confer. They helped art by encouraging the production of the best. The modern Church only helps it by encouraging production generally amongst which the best may be occasionally discoverable.

CHAPTER XIII

THE INFLUENCE OF PROTESTANTISM ON RELIGIOUS ART

EARLY Protestant iconoclasm was not so much a rebellion against art as a condemnation of idolatry. In this it confounded the use of sculpture and painting in religious edifices with the worship of images. The use of sculpture might, however, without any such confusion, be forbidden as a general measure of prudence, and a safeguard against the occasional development of idolatry. Without any narrow-minded intolerance of the innocent use of art a Protestant might argue as follows. He might say that although the use of statues in the Church of Rome is in the great majority of cases no more than an innocent help to the imagination, and, in fact, exactly like the fictitious statues of early kings whose portraits we do not possess, there is still a possibility, when such statues are admitted in great numbers, that a few of them here and there may assume, in popular belief, the quality of idols. This really does happen in the Church of Rome whenever one particular image is supposed to have virtues of its own, and to be not merely a representation but a power. To prevent popular aberrations of this kind it may, I think, be reasonably argued that the total exclusion of figure sculpture from churches is not too great a sacrifice.

Idolatry, in Christian times, is not favourable to the fine arts, because the popular credulity belongs naturally to an uneducated state of mind, and does not attach itself to works of artistic merit. On the other hand, the prudence which excludes all figure sculpture from a dread of idolatry is obviously unfavourable to art, and that which admits secular but not religious art into churches is discouraging to the religious sentiment in art. There are churches in Protestant countries where the ecclesiastical authorities would admit the statue of almost any distinguished layman on a monument but not a figure of Christ upon the Cross. In Westminster Abbey how much sculpture commemorates the acts of military officers and how little

glorifies the acts of the Apostles! That edifice has now become far more a secular museum than a monument of the history of Christianity.

All lovers of art are naturally opposed to the iconoclast, and they have the better reason on their side that the iconoclast acts under the impulse of indiscriminating anger. Nevertheless, although the first Protestant iconoclasm was an expression of temporary anger, it left an enduring repugnance to certain forms of art in connection with religious services. This repugnance has greatly varied, not only in degree, but in the remarkable differences of its application. In some Protestant communities it went so far as to banish art altogether, including ecclesiastical architecture and instrumental music. Others admitted not only architecture but even the representation of religious personages in stained glass. In the Church of England, altar-pieces, though rare, are not absolutely excluded, and figure sculpture is admitted, not only in architectural decoration, but behind and above the altar in bas-relief or reredos. The most notable of recent examples, the reredos of St. Paul's Cathedral, has given rise to a controversy too subtile, perhaps, for laymen to appreciate, from which it appears that sculptured figures forming part of a structural whole are admissible in Anglican churches, but that isolated figures are more objectionable. Even if the controversy were settled in this sense, it would still leave room for figure sculpture of an advanced and elaborate kind. The Anglican clergy seem willing to accept almost all art that is decorative, whether painted or carved, but they hesitate with regard to that which is representative, and they have always had the good taste to avoid that low and gross realism which appeals to the childish instincts of the most ignorant. It is not in an Anglican church that you would find a carved and painted wooden figure of Christ in a garden of Gethsemane with plants of painted zinc in the calculated obscurity of a side-chapel.

Whilst Protestantism has greatly discouraged figure art in churches, it has disseminated it in illustrations of the Bible, and in pictures and engravings of sacred subjects for the adornment of private houses. The tendency of Protestantism is far more to encourage the graphic than the plastic arts. Pictures and engravings illustrating the life of Christ are common in Protestant communities, but statues are infinitely more rare. The statue seems already half an idol, since a certain possible degree of veneration would turn it into one; the picture seems more innocent, though the eyes of a painted virgin have been known, it is said, to weep or wink. There is no evidence that any one ever made an idol of an engraving.

In endeavouring to understand the action of Protestantism upon art we cannot forget that Protestantism is, in its nature, a protest, an antagonism.

The feeling of antagonism is strongest when Protestant communities are in the first heat of their fight for independence; as they gain a sense of security it gradually declines, and finally, when the power of Rome is no longer dreaded, the Churches independent of her almost forget to protest, and the old spirit of hostility is considered to be in bad taste. The Protestant objection to figure art declines along with all other objections to Romish doctrines and practices. It is no longer thought evidence of idolatry in the Romanist that he uses a crucifix or an image of the Virgin as an aid to his religious imagination. The cultivated and refined Protestantism of our day is, in fact, hardly Protestantism at all, for it does not protest. It is a form of Christianity, simpler in its practices than the Roman, yet almost without hostility to Rome. The tendency is rather to minimise than to exaggerate the danger of idolatry, and the time may come when that danger may seem too remote to be taken into consideration. I mean that in such a Church as the Anglican, for example, it may seem utterly unlikely that any one, however ignorant, would attribute miraculous power to a graven image. When the danger of idolatry seems as unreal as that of witchcraft there will remain no valid reason for the exclusion of either the graphic or the plastic arts, which may then be employed in the service of religion as freely and innocently as music and architecture are now.

One of the consequences of Protestantism has been the transference of sacred art from churches to public galleries, a change of destination quite in harmony with our habit of valuing religious paintings rather for their technical qualities, such as colour and composition, than for their fidelity to the religious ideal. In this way the cartoons of Raphael, instead of being hung in a church or in some suitable chapel, were first preserved in a royal palace and afterwards in a popular museum. When the Ansidei Raphael (the Virgin enthroned) was purchased at great cost by the State, nobody once thought of placing the picture in a church, which would have been its natural destination; it was hung in a collection where religious and profane pictures are mingled indiscriminately, and where no visitor is expected to maintain a religious frame of mind. In short, religious pictures are considered artistic merchandise like any others, and the visitors to our public collections admire at one moment the attractions of some Venetian beauty, and at another the dignity of the Holy Virgin.

There may, perhaps, be a special office for Protestantism in the development of religious art. The Protestant temper, with its desire for simplicity and its dislike to pompous ornament, may encourage a kind of realism quite foreign to the thoughts of Raphael. It may have a confidence in the bare fact, the simple truth, that he did not venture to indulge. Not that it seems

a very hopeful enterprise to subordinate religion to realism, for the religious sentiment is much more in harmony with the artistic ideal, and can never feel at ease when tied down rigorously to the positive and the prosaic. At all events, it may be safely predicted that whatever place realistic art may win for itself in picture galleries and private houses, it can never, under any circumstances, be in its proper place in association with public worship. They who meet together for that purpose seek instinctively those great arts, such as architecture, oratory, and music, which have the power to lift them above the petty details of ordinary life. If painting and sculpture are called in as auxiliaries, they ought not to be less inspiring than a mass by Mozart or the architecture of the Sainte Chapelle. All the great arts ought to exercise the same powers in the service of religion, and these indeed are one power only, that of exaltation.

CHAPTER XIV

PROTESTANT ART—REMBRANDT

THE fundamental principle of Raphael was, as we have seen, to reflect back on the lives of religious personages the posthumous importance they have gained by the worldly success of a magnificent ecclesiastical organisation. For Raphael the Church was first a splendid human hierarchy reaching up to the very gates of Heaven, and the Supreme Pontiff sat enthroned so near to the celestial Court that his own ways of imposing upon the imagination might be supposed to prevail in the region immediately above him. If Raphael did not adorn his Apostles with jewellery and embroidery in the mediæval fashion, it was only because he knew that their dignity might be better enhanced by draperies that could be made to fall invariably in noble folds. In his partial use of nudity in religious art (as for example the naked arm and chest of Christ in the Charge to Peter, or the four limbs of St. Paul in the scene of his conversion), Raphael was only translating power of another kind into physical power, and a strong arm seemed mightier than a silken sleeve.

Rembrandt had an entirely different conception of religious history. He took no account whatever of the increment of importance gained by the lapse of time, and by the increase of sacerdotal authority and wealth. The success of the Church as a worldly institution—that social and political success which gives it importance for a man of the world—evidently had not the slightest interest for Rembrandt. On the contrary, he tried to get above the magnificent river to its humble sources on the distant hills; or, to compare the case with the history of a human family, he made no attempt to ennoble the Church's ancestors, but tried as he best could to imagine them in their original rank in life. For this way of dealing with his subject Rembrandt was greatly aided by the circumstances of his own social condition. He lived amongst people without pretension, kept to his work like any other workman, and saw the humble world around him with a complete-

ness of interest and sympathy that would have been impossible for a courtly, or even for an aristocratic, artist. The sympathies awakened in Rembrandt's mind by the constant observation of life around him were easily transferred to the field of artistic and religious imagination. He had few books, but amongst them were a Bible and a translation of Josephus. The Bible he had certainly read well and knew familiarly. Amongst his numerous illustrations of religious subjects it is not possible to mention any that relate to the history of the Church as a sacerdotal institution; they all relate to biblical history exclusively, and most of them illustrated those biblical incidents which bring religion most directly home to the common people. In a word, the Christianity illustrated by Rembrandt is that which preceded sacerdotalism, and I suppose that every Protestant who reads this will say that such is the kind of Christianity that he desires to believe and to practise.

A limited life usually gains in strength and intensity from its very limitations. Rembrandt knew his Bible and something of Josephus; his library consisted of these two and seventeen other volumes. There is strong negative evidence in his art that he took but little interest in anything outside of living humanity and his Bible. He hardly ever attempted secular historical painting, and there is not a single instance in the whole range of his performance of anything like that romantic and legendary sense which in our own day has given to poets and painters a sympathy with mediæval catholicism. It is probable that his intellect, like others of small literary or critical culture, could have no place for legend unless accepted as true in the most matter-of-fact sense. For the uncultivated a story is true or a lie, a religion is a fact or an imposture, neither tale nor faith is a product of the creative imagination. For Rembrandt no religion not literally believed could ever have the imaginative charm it had for the profoundly romantic intellect of Rossetti. The consequence to his art of this simple condition of mind was an intense reality and life. No interpretation of religious subjects has ever possessed more vitality than that of Rembrandt. He carried all his observation of real life into his biblical reading. With his Bible in his hand the world he knew became transformed into the miraculous world of prophets and apostles. In going back sixteen or twenty centuries his mind was not solitary or unattended. He took with him an entire population of keen-witted or simple folks at every stage of human life, from the infant in the arms to the child scrawling thoughtlessly with his finger on the ground, the truant boy fetched home by his parents, the wasteful youth returning after his prodigality, the plain, ordinary-looking young preacher, the acute business-like Jew, the sapient elders, and the weary oldest men and women

of all, bent, poverty-stricken, and decrepit. The intensity of Rembrandt's popular sympathies and his dislike to fine society gave him a great advantage in the illustration of the earliest Christianity which began almost exclusively amongst the poor. A genteel religion was never in Rembrandt's way; he had never perceived the advantages of the alliance between the Church and the *beau monde*.

It is a Protestant characteristic in Rembrandt to treat accessories of all kinds with a certain carelessness or disdain. This separates him from the whole spirit of mediæval art in which nineteen-twentieths of the time and labour given are bestowed on matters without any vital importance. Even in Raphael, though his accessories are less elaborate (his art is much simpler as to material than that of the Middle Ages) they are wrought with a sustained attention and a patient care, whether by himself or his assistants, that implies more respect for them than Rembrandt would have considered them to be worth. Raphael never shrank from the repetition of details. In a rough sketch his figures and accessories were treated with equal rapidity and freedom, but whenever Raphael had time to draw the figure carefully he drew furniture with the same care. In the Pitti picture of the Madonna the numerous quatrefoils in the waggon-vault above her are clearly drawn one by one, and so are the separate scallops in the valance hanging from the canopy of the baldacchino. In the "Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple" the architecture is all made out as coolly as in an architect's elevation, the emotion of the exciting scene not having communicated itself, in the slightest degree, to the hand that designed the arches and pilasters. In Rembrandt all accessories are treated as if the artist did not care to waste much time upon them unless they happen to be in small quantity, like the jewelled scabbard and hilt of Abraham's dagger in the picture of the "Sacrifice at the Hermitage." Rembrandt had ample opportunities for inventing rich architecture if it had interested him, yet nothing is more remarkable in his representation of scenes in the Temple than the poverty of the building itself. In his two etchings of Jesus disputing with the Doctors there is not even a beginning of architectural invention; the figures are everything, and the little masonry there is serves only to place them on conveniently different levels. A plate that pretends to more architecture is that of "St. Peter healing the Lame Man at the Beautiful Gate." Even here we find no architectural beauty or interest, though the subject called for it. The gate has no more adornment than the arch of a common bridge; the Temple, as seen through it, is a confused mass of barbarous construction; the columns on each side of the altar are only big rounded posts. There is neither grace of construction nor richness of

detail anywhere in the whole plate. Another well-known etching, "Christ driving out the Money-changers," represents an incident in the Temple itself; but although M. Charles Blanc said, "La scène se passe dans un Temple dont l'ordonnance est riche," the plain truth is that there are only some vaults and columns very slightly sketched, and not invented with any taste or care. At the best they resemble the architecture of some very ordinary Dutch church. Again, in "The Presentation in the Temple" the building is representated by a vacant and gloomy vault, resembling nothing so much as an extensive wine-cellar. If from architecture we pass to costume, we find Rembrandt better supplied with materials, but scarcely more archæological. Vosmaer suggests that Rembrandt got his oriental costumes from the eastern merchants whom he saw at Amsterdam, and from Turkish costumes in books. We know from his portraits of himself that he had a taste for oriental dress. That a nearer approach to archæological accuracy was unnecessary is proved by our own easy acceptance of Rembrandt's unlearned orientalism. It is far more satisfying than Gothic or Byzantine bedizenments, and here too we find the influence of Protestantism which is satisfied with reality, or with its own conception of the past, and does not want to make sacred personages look richer than they really were. If the reader will compare any of Rembrandt's religious pictures with those Roman Catholic paintings that represent magnificent dignitaries of the Church, he will see how the mind of the Dutch artist had preserved a Protestant homeliness. The very few works of his that show any sense of sacerdotal pomp are imposing rather by nobility of attitude than by the accumulated details of complicated ritualism. Even in the etching called, "The Presentation; in Rembrandt's dark manner," one of the rare examples of priestly pomp in the whole production of the master, the immense dignity and importance of the two priests, especially of the one who stands behind, are due more to attitude than to jewels or embroidery, and the jewels are not painfully imitated, but sketched in the quickest and most summary manner, a sort of execution that says plainly enough, "I do not choose to waste my time over these gewgaws." In some of his portraits he would paint the pearls of a necklace one by one, to amuse himself and please the lady.

If the spirit of Rembrandt is easily distinguishable from that of Roman Catholic artists, so, on the other hand (and this too is a mark of Protestantism), it is outside of the pagan spirit. There was no real sympathy between Rembrandt and classical paganism. He cared nothing about the beauty of the body. His Adam is a hideous anticipation of the modern belief in our descent from anthropoid apes. His studies of the nude form

JESUS DISPUTING WITH THE DOCTORS

ETCHING BY REMBRANDT

REPRODUCED IN HÉLIOGRAVURE BY AMAND-DURAND

SELECTED as an example of the indifference of Rembrandt to the decorative richness of accessories and of the concentration of his mind on the human interest of a situation. The sketch is full of dramatic power, and it is not decorative in the least. The boy Jesus keeps his place, in the social sense, whilst he is embarrassing his present superiors in learning or in the reputation for it. The crowd press listening behind.

At the same time this plate shows what genuine sketching is. There is abundant evidence in Rembrandt's work that he could finish with the utmost perfection when he chose, but here he has put down an idea and left it. Genuine sketches do not please people who are not satisfied so long as the joints of every little finger are not accurately drawn, and others are displeased when tones and textures are not carefully made out. For intelligent criticism every work of art is satisfactory if it is consistently conceived and harmonious so far as it goes.

Rembrandt. F. 1654

in woman are utterly without ideality. All his naked figures are inspired by an honest but crude and even vulgar realism. This indifference to the beauty of the body is one of the marks of Protestantism as opposed to the Paganism of antiquity or the Renascence. The reader may test this for himself by considering whether he has ever met with naked statues or pictures of the naked figure in strictly evangelical households, or whether in such households he has ever observed that openly-expressed delight in physical beauty which is common (and in its way perfectly innocent) amongst the Pagans of the present day. In some of Rembrandt's sketches of the dead Jesus the body is so poor and so devoid of beauty that the conception gains in pathos what it lacks in grace. The force of his genius was directed to the representation of action and emotion, which always seem natural in his works, and occasionally the conception is so intense and passionate that the touch of nature abolishes time and distance, and brings us actually into the presence of a patriarch as he gives his blessing, a saint on her deathbed, or a sovereign in his innermost chamber forgetting crown and dignity as he prays to the King of Kings. Rembrandt's own sense of reality was so strong that when left to himself and not working, as he sometimes did under Italian influences, he failed to idealise when there was an urgent necessity for idealisation. An angel is unavoidably an ideal creature, as no painter has ever painted one from life. Rembrandt had never seen one, and he ought to have imagined the best he could. This he certainly did in the St. Petersburg picture of "Abraham entertaining Angels," where the spiritual messengers are represented by human forms not altogether unworthy of them; but in the well-known etching of the same subject, where the Deity is sitting at table with angels whilst Abraham serves the company, they are like Dutchmen dining in a garden. Still, with all its faults, the religious art of Rembrandt is as consistent as any other, and as acceptable even in the present day to all but the fastidiously critical. It is faithful to its own principle of homely veracity; it is observant of details that are really significant, and disdainful of those that are not. Above all, it is constantly human, as becomes the religion of the Son of Man, and it most precisely follows the example of Jesus himself in never treating the poor, the aged, the infirm, with ridicule, indifference, or contempt.

CHAPTER XV

THE EFFECT OF UNBELIEF UPON RELIGIOUS ART

THE attitude of mind which is called in religious language "unbelief" will invariably be found, after sufficient inquiry or analysis, to be equivalent to the rejection of miracle, either partial or complete. And of this attitude of mind we have, all of us, a sufficient experience to enable us to understand it. The best of Protestants disbelieves the numerous miracles by which the Church of Rome, down to the present day, proves the authenticity of her descent from the Apostles, and the most pious Romanist, in his turn, disbelieves the miracles that the zeal of Islam has attributed to Mahomet. Therefore, to the Romanist, Protestantism appears what Deism is to the Protestant, that is, one of the numerous degrees or forms of "infidelity," and the Romanist himself, on landing in a Mahometan country, is looked upon and designated as an "Infidel."

All these, however, are but instances of partial unbelief, for the Protestant believes in some miracles, the Romanist and the Mahometan in others. Even the pure Deist believes in the miraculous creation of the universe. In our time "unbelief" takes a still wider signification than the Deism of the last century. It now means the *total* unbelief in miracles, including the miracle of creation. Modern unbelief, as represented, for example, by Haeckel, includes all the past in the category of the natural, and although there is one great difficulty, the origin of life, the unbeliever in miraculous creation thinks that the beginnings of life were themselves as much natural processes as its continuation.

It is this complete unbelief in miracle which is especially characteristic of our time. It is extending and increasing, and is now looked upon with so little moral reprobation that a great writer avowed it in the plainest terms, and yet after his death was honourably commemorated by a bust in Westminster Abbey. It is certainly shared by many artists,—indeed, the artistic

profession is less religious than most others—possibly because an exercise of the emotions (which is one reason why religion is so valuable in an age of hard material interests) is supplied in a great measure by art itself. Professor Seeley perceived the truth when he observed that the artist seemed irreligious to others because art was his religion, and I may be able to carry that idea a little further than Professor Seeley did, without falling into any exaggeration. He saw that the artist's ideal included the emotional study of beauty which is an elevating passion, but I think he failed to do justice to the artist on the side of patience in labour and perseverance against difficulties. The artistic professions (including, of course, both music and the art of writing) are followed with a degree of courage very rarely understood or appreciated by those who have not practised them,—a courage that would be utterly beyond the strength of human nature, if it were not sustained by that emotional force which always accompanies the true artistic gift. That emotional force is the "sacred fire" without which nothing can be done. It is well known to every artist that without this enthusiasm a student will not have the necessary indomitableness. They who have it not are the weak brethren who faint and fail upon the way.

Now, by whatsoever name we choose to call it, the emotional force that makes men strive so hard and so long for the attainment of an ideal excellence is so closely allied to religion that the slightest imaginative effort will carry the artist immediately from the one to the other. Unbelief in the literal fact of miracle is therefore a very slight obstacle to the artistic imagination. The modern painter or poet goes back easily to an earlier state of religious feeling. The artistic sense takes pleasure in the archaic, it deeply enjoys a return to the past, it does not coldly turn away from the youth of humanity but recurs to it with fondness. The most cultivated of poets assume a simplicity, even a credulity in verse, that are foreign to their prose. This is because in poetry they are artists, and art is willing to believe, or to dream that it believes.

Now, with regard to the artists of the past, there have been whisperings of doubt concerning the orthodoxy of some of the greatest, circulated at a time when the accusation of religious heresy was as dangerous and as dishonouring as that of witchcraft. Lionardo was suspected, not of heresy only, but of total unbelief. Vasari printed a statement in his first edition (afterwards omitted) that Lionardo had been led by his studies in natural history "to conceive such heretical ideas that he did not belong to any religion, but esteemed it better to be a philosopher than a Christian." His religious pictures have not in the least suffered from his liberty of thought, whatever may have been the degree of it. No one could set about

a religious picture in a more serious or thoughtful temper than his, or take more pains to give adequate dignity to Christ and the Apostles. His Virgins are painted with as complete a respect for the subject as those of any other artist. There is no trace in Lionardo, I will not say of levity, but of that indifference which might be easily attributed to a sceptic. He worked, in fact, with the most scrupulous and reverent care.

It may be answered that the accusation of unbelief must in this instance have been exaggerated, as Lionardo took the Sacrament on his death-bed. The truth is that we know hardly anything about the real opinions of artists and philosophers who lived in ages when utterance was not permitted, and our ignorance leaves room for the most complete uncertainty even with regard to men who are supposed to be religious. Whatever may be the pretensions of criticism, it is, in practice, quite unable to distinguish between the art that comes from genuine belief and the art that is but the expression of imaginative sympathy with belief. That imaginative sympathy may be complete to such a degree that no dissimulation is necessary on the part of the artist. He is for the moment, to all artistic intents and purposes, a true believer. A good Protestant who has not at times felt himself a Roman Catholic, and even a Mahometan, must be poorly gifted with imagination. Sir Walter Scott was on due occasion as good a Romanist as need be, praying to the Virgin and believing in the Papal Power. Tennyson was at one time a Mahometan :—

> "When the breeze of a joyful dawn blew free
> In the silken sail of infancy,
> The tide of time flow'd back with me,
> The forward-flowing tide of time;
> And many a sheeny summer-morn,
> Adown the Tigris I was borne,
> By Bagdat's shrines of fretted gold,
> High-walled gardens green and old;
> *True Mussulman was I and sworn,*
> For it was in the golden prime
> Of good Haroun Alraschid."

I remember that when George Eliot's identity with the translator of Strauss and Feuerbach first became known to the public, there were good, honest, simple-minded people who were shocked to think that all the religious parts of *Adam Bede* were hypocritical make-believe. How hard it is to explain to simple minds that whilst George Eliot was intellectually an unbeliever, her sympathy with the feelings of religious people was absolutely sincere, and her imagination powerful enough for the dramatic expression of such feelings without hypocrisy! Perhaps I may make this

clearer by reference to a religious practice now abandoned by the great majority of English people, that of praying for the dead. Any one with feeling and imagination must understand the profound consolation that there is in a practice which makes it seem possible to be of use to the dead, to do them some good, to send after them into the unknown region beyond the grave, whither no material gift can pass, winged spiritual messengers of earthly loving-kindness, and to believe that still, by the grace of the Almighty, such expression of human love is neither impotent nor wrong! Now, it is the privilege of artistic expression, whether in literature, painting, or music, that without in any way engaging the conscience of the artist it permits the complete expression of his sympathy; and whatever may be the unbelief of the future, whether it settles into some form of Deism, or Pantheism, or even darkens into that dreaded Atheism which is now said to be coming upon us like the shadow of an eternal night, there will still be room, in all imaginative natures, for sympathy with every beautiful belief. Nay, there may even be a preference, a regretful preference, for those lost hopes, those saintly ideals and aspirations for which modern science has never one word of encouragement; and we may look back to them wistfully as men whose life is narrowed by impoverished age, look back to the infinite dreams of youth. "I am not ashamed to confess," says a modern scientific reasoner, "that with this virtual negation of God the universe to me has lost its soul of loveliness; and although from henceforth the precept to 'work while it is day' will doubtless but gain an intensified force from the terribly intensified meaning of the words that 'the night cometh when no man can work,' yet when at times I think, as think at times I must, of the appalling contrast between the hallowed glory of that creed which once was mine and the lonely mystery of existence as now I find it—at such times I shall ever feel it impossible to avoid the sharpest pang of which my nature is susceptible."

The state of feeling expressed in this quotation would be singularly favourable to the production of religious art, for art is the one kind of utterance which permits the fullest expression of feeling without comprising honesty. The unbeliever cannot pray to Christ, but he may paint the Good Shepherd or the Man of Sorrows; he recites no litany to the Queen of Heaven, but he may paint the Virgin Mother; the Holy Ghost is not in his creed, yet he may poetically behold and describe that mystic tree—

"Within whose secret growth the Dove
Is sometimes felt to be.
While every leaf that His plumes touch
Saith His Name audibly."

We desire to know a little more by legend than a severe criticism permits to us. In this legendary way the western nations associate themselves with eastern tradition, for did not the three Maries land at last, after the death of Christ, on the far distant coast of Provence? And did not Joseph of Arimathæa bring the Holy Grail to our own England?

> "The cup, the cup itself, from which our Lord
> Drank at the last sad supper with his own.
> This, from the blessed land of Aromat—
> After the day of darkness, when the dead
> Went wandering o'er Moriah—the good saint
> Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought
> To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn
> Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord.
> And there awhile it bode; and if a man
> Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at once,
> By faith, of all his ills."

There is belief enough here for the purposes of art, and the vividness of the poetic faith is repeatedly proved by the poet's vision of the "holy thing" on those very rare occasions when it appears to the most pure. Even a creed of this poetical kind contains a strong element of sincerity. The modern thinker is not remote from ancestors who thoroughly believed in supernatural visitations; he inherits a strong tendency to believe which is checked by scientific severity concerning evidence. This severity can only be agreeable to the most disciplined intellects, and it is agreeable even to them only in their hours of self-restraint. Poetry and painting come to them as a deliverance from science, and from the terrible absolutism of regularity that pervades all natural law. They give liberty to the imagination, and the most frequent use that it makes of this liberty is to fly back instinctively to an earlier time and make itself young again.

CHAPTER XVI

RELIGIOUS ART FROM LIFE

IN this chapter I shall endeavour to establish a distinction between two departments of religious art, one of which is *never* founded on the observation of life, whilst the other *always* is.

In all the roll of distinguished artists who have illustrated religious subjects, it is not possible to name a single painter who has witnessed, for example, the effect of a miracle on a crowd. Miracles, and the effects of miracles, can only be painted from imagination. They are always distant from us in place or time, or in both, and they are never announced beforehand, so that an artist might be prepared to observe them as astronomers are for predicted astronomical events. They never occur in great capitals, which are the modern seats of the fine arts.

The interest that belongs to representations of events that the artist can have had no opportunity of watching with his own eyes, must either be ideal or purely technical. Some recent attempts have been made to give reality to the past by the intentional anachronism of modern costume, as in certain pictures by Edelfelt, Skredsvig, and others, illustrating the life of Christ, but this device is unsatisfactory, as we feel that it does nothing for the ideal, or for veracity either.

After what has been said in the preceding chapter about the sufficiency of an imaginative belief, it may seem almost superfluous to regret that the painter cannot have the authority of an eye-witness, but there is in the popular mind a desire for veracity which happens now to agree with the scientific temper of the more instructed. We should all of us like historical painting to be faithful, and much religious painting would acquire a novel interest if it could be made truly historical. As the absence of authentic portraits, and the want of opportunities, makes this kind of accuracy unattainable, religious pictures have no serious interest as representations of events that happened, or are believed to have happened, in the past. The

best of them hold their place in our own day by their technical merits rather than by the interest of the subject or any supposed veracity in its representation. If the reader objects that I am placing art on a low ground when referring to this kind of fidelity, I can only answer that it is in human nature to like a representation to be true, and that there is a wish to be able to believe the painter even in times of the most searching criticism, though in such times (and we live in them) it becomes increasingly difficult to do so.

Is there, then, any kind of religious painting that may be unquestionably accepted as true?

Yes, there is the representation of genuine religious emotion, observed in actual life. The art that deals exclusively with this does not offer so wide a field for the imagination as that which takes for its province all the true or legendary past, but it requires delicate and complete sympathy, and the influence of it may be most favourable to the culture of the sincerest religious feeling, both in artists and in the public.

A large class of pictures, both in England and on the Continent, illustrate prayer; and in Protestant countries the reading of the Bible affords an excellent subject from the grouping of the household around a common centre, as in the "Cottar's Saturday Night," so often illustrated, when

> "The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace
> The big ha'-bible, ance his father's pride."

The solitary bible-reading of a lonely old shepherd in the Highlands is an excellent subject of the same class, having an element of pathos in the solitude itself, and in the recourse to the religious ideal amidst the poor surroundings of a very hard reality. Even after death, the signs of religious faith may give a kind of hallowed interest. An old Scotch grandmother is lying dead, and the Bible is shut, with her spectacles in it where she was reading yesterday for the last time. In a French cottage there is the little "chapel," the tiny altar against the wall, with its plaster image and cheap vases filled with common flowers.

Amongst modern artists M. Legros has been especially successful in the expression of the religious frame of mind, which he has carefully studied in rustic French churches. That the expression of humble piety may be dissociated as far as possible from the things of this world, Legros avoids wealth, luxury, and intelligence, putting his whole force into the expression of patience, meekness, and a wistful yearning for that which the world cannot give.

Some other French artists have imposed upon themselves the much more difficult task of making the fashionable and worldly lady look truly

AN EPISCOPAL PROCESSION AT SANTIAGO

DRAWN BY DANIEL VIERGE

REPRODUCED IN HÉLIOGRAVURE BY P. DUJARDIN

AN original drawing done from recollection of the actual scene.

This is not the entire drawing. I had it first completely reproduced, but the figures, by reduction, were too minute to be easily distinguished, so the most important part was chosen and limited by the artist and myself together.

The drawing is inserted as an example of the most modern work with the pen *executed on purpose for reproduction.* In this particular intention it differs from all drawings by the old masters. In the original the broad blacks were added with a brush charged with Indian ink more or less diluted. Their true values are preserved in héliogravure, which has also given the lines accurately.

Work of this kind unites some of the qualities of etching with some qualities of woodcut.

Daniel Vierge is a Spanish artist, his real name being Urrabieta. He has had more influence than any other artist on modern drawing for purposes of illustration, and is unquestionably a rare genius.

Imp. Wittmann Paris

instead of conventionally pious. This can only be accomplished by making her unconscious of her fine clothes, and praying side by side with the poor, and on a cheap rush-bottomed *prie-dieu*, not more luxurious than theirs. When Christian equality before heaven is expressed in this manner with perfect tact, the subject may have an interest of its own. The humility of the poor seems only natural, but when that religious virtue is found in the luxurious classes the power of religion seems enhanced.

The artistic value of religious sentiment and practices has been curiously demonstrated by the celebrity of Millet's "Angelus." Apart from its religious sentiment there is very little in that picture. The composition is exactly what a child would be likely to invent, the landscape consists of a large flat potato-field with a commonplace village on the horizon, the figures are ugly, without even any rustic distinction or grace of attitude, the accessories uninteresting and commonplace. The picture is quite without beauty of any kind, except that the colour is better than in some other works by the same artist. On the other hand, this picture is one of the best examples of religious realism in existence. It is quite in harmony with the modern spirit, because it expresses nothing that we cannot easily believe. There are no angels flying about, with wings impossibly glued on behind the shoulder-blades, there are no levitated saints, nor is there any attempt to make portraits of unknown faces. The artist paints his own time and puts his whole force into the expression of a perfectly genuine sentiment. Our sense of the genuineness of the sentiment is only enhanced by the calculated poverty in everything else. Towards the close of a long day of labour these two poor people hear the evening bell, and they pause, as they stand, for prayer, he, reverently, with head uncovered, she bending forward with joined hands. It is the poetry of the religious ideal touching softly, like the evening light, the hard, prosaic existence of the poor.[1]

Before the monks were expelled from the monastery of *La Pierre qui Vire*, it was their custom not merely to pause but actually to kneel at the sound of the *Angelus*, as described in my novel of *Wenderholme*.

"The monk promised to lead the Colonel to Philip Stanburne. They passed along wild paths cut in the rock and the forest, with rudely carved

[1] It has been affirmed, with reference to the choice of this subject, that Millet took it, not from reality, but from his own imagination, that as a matter of fact peasants do not pray in the fields when they hear the *Angelus*. The custom, however, is still quite sufficiently prevalent to authorise a painter in the illustration of it. The peasants in the *Autunois* pray, or do not pray, when they hear the evening bell, according to the degree of their religious belief. When it is strong and intact, they do not fail to pray, and the most pious kneel. When the belief is only half-belief, they pay little or no attention. The *Angelus* is the evening bell, sounded, not according to the hour, but in the gloaming. The name is from the first word in *Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariæ*.

bas-reliefs of the chief scenes of the Passion erected at stated distances. They saw many monks engaged in the most laborious manual occupations; some were washing linen in the clear river; others were road-making, with picks and wheel-barrows; others were hard at work as masons, building the walls of some future portion of the monastery, or the enclosures of its fields. All worked and were silent, not even looking at the strangers as they passed. At length the three came to a little wood, and, having passed through the wood, to a small field on the steep slope of a hill. In the field two men were ploughing in their monastic dress with a pair of white oxen.

"Suddenly the Angelus rang from the belfry of the monastery, and its clear tones filled the quiet valley where these monks had made their home. All the monks heard it, and all who heard it fell instantaneously on their knees in the midst of their labour, wherever they might happen to be. The masons dropped their stones and trowels, the washermen prayed with the wet linen still in their grasp, the ploughman knelt between the handles of his plough, and the driver with the goad in his right hand. The Colonel's guide dropped upon the ploughed earth, and prayed. All in the valley prayed."

Here, as it seems to me, is an excellent subject for a religious picture of the most modern kind, in which the religious sentiment may be very powerfully expressed without a single incredible circumstance.

MAN IN ART

PART IV

HISTORY AND REVIVALS

CHAPTER I

THE DESCENT OF MAN

THE subject of this chapter could not be stated in the limited space of a title. We all of us believe or imagine something about the origin of the human race. Do our beliefs on this subject affect the representation of man in the fine arts? Are they likely to favour or to discourage the pursuit of the artistic ideal? These are the questions that I shall endeavour to answer in this chapter, the title being no more than a suggestion or indication.

Let me first endeavour to state quite fairly the two great leading beliefs that divide European opinion between them. The first, perhaps, may be but rarely held at the present date in that absolute completeness which was almost universal in the first half of the nineteenth century; but there is so much difficulty in ascertaining the exact shades of contemporary beliefs, and so much delicacy, as well as knowledge, would be needed to state each of them in a manner likely to give perfect satisfaction to the holder, that I renounce the attempt as beyond the range of a treatise on the fine arts. What I call "the old belief" is that which was held, or at least professed, by all authoritative teachers in the time of my youth, and received without question by all women and by an overwhelming majority of men. On reference to one of my own schoolbooks I find a clear statement that the world was created four thousand and four years before the birth of Christ. Five days later the first man was made from the dust of the earth and miraculously endowed with the power of language; then a woman was made from one of his ribs, and she had the same gift.

The essentials of this belief that concern the fine arts are—first, that man was formed by the Creator as a perfect human being, or at least as a perfect body, for the breath of life was breathed into him afterwards. He was not an improvement upon some previous form, being made from "the dust of the ground." The idea of creation as received by all of us from the most ancient books is not that of sudden magic, but of contrivance

and execution—the execution, though inconceivably rapid, being still *work*, resembling human work in being perfectly distinct from rest, and distinct also from unceasing natural action, such as the equable motion of a planet. The first man is therefore not what we call a natural product, but a piece of divine art; and however much his descendants may have deviated or degenerated, we cannot for a moment suppose that he himself, as God's own handiwork, could be anything less than a type of physical perfection. As to intellectual acumen, the case is not the same, since intellectual acumen requires the prolonged experience of a populous and contentious world. We therefore imagine that Adam must have been as superior physically to Voltaire as he was inferior to him in intelligence. Eve, too, is a special work of the Creator, who removed one of Adam's ribs and used it as material out of which He fashioned a woman, as an artist models in wax. We naturally suppose that a woman made in this direct manner by the Divine Artist would be pre-eminently beautiful.

And this physical aspect of the matter is not all. The Creator cares for Adam and Eve, and places them in the garden of Eden, where He visits them personally, warning them, and showing a direct interest in them as individuals. It is true that He punishes them, but that is a proof of personal concern. The Creator in Genesis is not a God who makes a world to abandon it ever afterwards to blind and pitiless natural laws, or to the *régime* of pure accident. This gives a certain dignity to Adam and Eve in the time of their disaster. They are expelled from Paradise by a special divine decree, and the gate is guarded, not by some savage animal, but by an appointed angelic sentinel, armed with a flaming sword.

Now in all this conception of the origin of man there is, from first to last, nothing that is unfavourable to art, and much that is in the highest degree interesting and available from the artistic point of view. The biblical narrative is at the same time exactly adapted to the apprehension of primitive minds, and welcome, in another way, to the poetic sense of the most cultivated intellects. It was perfectly acceptable, at least as a poetic motive, to a mind with the splendid gifts and the extensive culture of Milton; and although for Shelley it was not credible in the matter-of-fact sense, it largely satisfied the needs of his imaginative nature. The secret of the charm is that the story of a lost paradise does not need to be literally true. Dead hopes and past activities are lost paradises, and few of us reach ripe age without having been expelled, not by a punishing Deity, but by anonymous forces equally irresistible. And when we have once been expelled, the gate is guarded against us so efficiently that there is no need of a flaming sword.

If we turn now to contemporary beliefs about the origin of man, we find, in the first place, no assurance of a date. Instead of the agreeable fixity of 4004 B.C. we have nothing behind us but an infinity of time. It is like being lost in the abyss of space beyond the confines of the sidereal universe. We have nothing fixed to measure from. Our scientific guides can only tell us that by transitions so gradual that there is no fixing of definite epochs, the human race, as we know it, has emerged from some inferior stage of existence which was itself an improvement on an earlier stage that preceded it, and so going back from lower to lower, a true history of mankind, if such could be written, would lead, they say, to some primitive and very simple form of life. From the artistic point of view this is inferior to the old explanation, because it gives no reason for supposing that primitive human beings possessed physical perfection. On the contrary, the scientific opinion is that men and women have risen to better forms instead of falling towards inferior ones. Science no more laments a loss of beauty than it tells of a lost paradise. In the picture entitled "B.C." by Mr. Watts, representing a prehistoric man making a gastronomic experiment with the first oyster, his wife curiously looking on, both figures are intentionally represented as of a comparatively low type that has still much progress to make before it attains even the perfection that we see in living men and women, not to speak of the classical ideal. That picture is an interesting result of the reversal of our notions about our ancestors which has been accomplished by scientific investigation. In former times painters looked back to the past as a time of perfection, Man having naturally been at his best when fresh from the hand of his Maker, for are not *made* things best when new?

There was also a feeling, prevalent though unexpressed, that creatures which came into the world by birth, according to the ordinary processes of nature, might be God's work in a general sense, but were not each of them specially made by God as Adam and Eve were made. People thought of deformed children as misshapen by some physical mischance affecting them before their birth, but nobody imagined the Deity deliberately setting to work to make a deformed child purposely in order that it might have a miserable life, neither did any one suppose that the Creator made deformed children from temporary inability to do better. The new views of the origin of mankind do not, therefore, very sensibly affect our opinion of the men and women we see around us. The strongest supporters of divine creation see glaring defects in the organisation of men and often make them a subject of ridicule, whilst no one who wanted to sell a horse would venture upon the argument that the animal must be perfect because an infallible Creator made him. We all look to breeding, to descent, and to what we call accident, as

the causes of the defects that we see in animal organisation, so that there is no perceptible difference, in judging these defects, between the most ancient and the most recent ways of thinking. The essential difference goes much further back. According to what our forefathers believed, God acted directly at certain ascertainable and comparatively recent dates, whereas according to the modern theory of natural creation there has never been any more direct or personal intervention of a Deity than that which we are able (or unable) to detect in the breeding of animals at the present day.

So far as the interest of this question is purely historical or scientific, it does not concern our subject, but it is artistic also. The old belief gave birth not only to the magnificent poem of Milton, but to many other poems, and to an innumerable progeny of works in painting and sculpture. The question is whether anything equivalent to these could have been suggested by the modern theory of evolution, and the answer can only be a decided negative. I am far from denying that the scientific theory offers a vast field for the imagination, but the defect of it is that it offers nothing definite, no definite human action, and no divine action whatever. Instead of Adam and Eve in Paradise and God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, instead of a conversation between Man and his Maker, science only tells us of incalculable ages of savage life before the birth of civilisation, savagery lower and lower as we go further into the unrecorded past, till finally our ancestors are not even human, but have the manners and customs of the gorilla or the chimpanzee. In this unlimited past of inferior and ever inferior existence there is nothing for art to celebrate with any pleasure or any pride. There is indeed a vast field of most pitiful interest, but there are no *persons* any more than amongst fishes, nor any events that can be more definitely fixed upon than the impact of nameless icebergs in an unvisited polar sea. Man, in those early times, went to his grave without name, fame, or record. The subject is not inspiring. No Milton will ever tell in majestic verse the wretched struggle for bare subsistence and the suffering from hardships of climate, and the undignified, unheroic bloodshed, which filled up the miserable days of prehistoric Man. Neither is his condition much better when he first emerges into the light of the written chronicle. "I know no study," says Professor Huxley, "which is so unutterably saddening as that of the evolution of humanity, as it is set forth in the annals of history. Out of the darkness of prehistoric ages man emerges with the marks of his lowly origin strong upon him. He is a brute, only more intelligent than the other brutes; a blind prey to impulses which as often as not lead him to destruction; a victim to endless illusions, which make his mental existence a terror and a burden, and fill his physical life with barren toil and battle."

ABEL DEAD

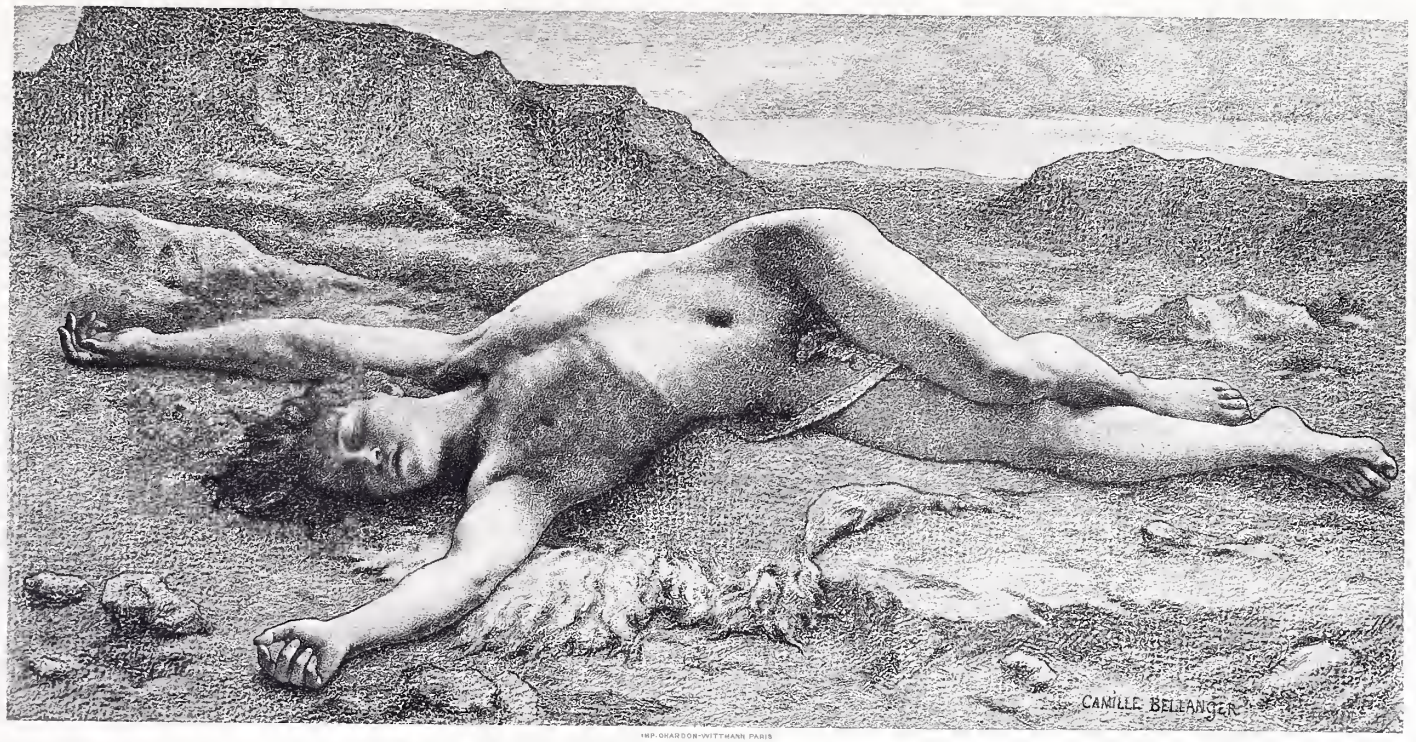
DRAWN BY CAMILLE BELLANGER

REPRODUCED IN HÉLIOGRAVURE BY P. DUJARDIN

THIS is a study for a well-known picture in the Luxembourg.

In selecting an illustration of death I was anxious to avoid the horrible and the ugly; and the consequence is, that I have chosen a drawing which *may* be quite true as a representation of death, but which gives only what (so far as outward appearances are concerned) it has in common with sleep. I have certainly seen peasants asleep, under the shadow of a tree in a harvest-field, exactly in this attitude. The attitude of a dead man (until the body has been put in order, according to the tastes of the living) has usually some peculiarity which is entirely unexpected. My impression is that this study was not taken from a corpse, but from a living model acting death under the direction of the artist. If it was really from a dead body that body was arranged purposely, as we here see it.

However this may be, death and sleep are so nearly allied that in some religious communities the accepted expression in announcing a death is "our dear brother fell asleep in Jesus," and poets have called death a "sleep" in every age and country. So this drawing answers to the ideal view of the subject.



IMP. CHARDON-WITTMANN PARIS

Painting, like poetry, requires some aliment for the imagination, and the past history of the human race, as science tells it, is too miserably mean and barren. There is but one element in savage life that is admirable for us, the endurance of hardship, but that is painful when prolonged. The imagination wants to be stimulated by tales of ancestors grander and nobler than ourselves, and instead of this the condition of humanity gets worse and worse as we penetrate further into the past. On behalf of science the answer may be made that a clearer knowledge of the past makes no difference whatever in the present condition of Man, that he is what he is, and that the discovery of his descent from Gods or from animals could not affect the reality of his present condition. It may even be argued that the scientific view is more hopeful than any other, since it tells of a marvellous progress already accomplished, and so gives reasonable ground of hope for an unimaginable improvement in the future. It may also be readily shown that the dread of a low origin for the human race is illogically derived from the feelings of a family which likes to be well descended, so that it may have a superiority over other families in its neighbourhood and be respected by them ; but it is obvious that the analogy fails when the whole human race is in question, seeing that, as a race, we have no external admirers but the lower animals, and these respect nothing in us but our powers of reward and punishment.

These arguments in favour of scientific views, and the one overwhelming unanswerable argument that the object of science is not what is agreeable but what is true, may settle the question so far as literature is concerned. It is indeed too late to write a *Paradise Lost* when Paradise is lost in a far deeper and wider sense—lost, not to one man and one woman, but to the imaginative memory of mankind. Still, though literature may accept the scientific view, and may even find in the vastness of the antiquity now opened behind us a sublimity compensating in some degree for the vanishing of the archangels and the ever-increasing remoteness of their Lord, it is impossible that the arts of painting and sculpture should contentedly replace Paradise by a primeval forest, and "our first parents" by a horde of anthropoid apes. These arts have still the resource of feigned or fictitious belief, and it is there that they will take refuge. Their subjects, if chosen from the early history of the race, will either be treated on the sternly realistic principle, if the artist takes a bitter pleasure in exhibiting the unpleasant aspects of things ; or else, if he shrinks from that, they may be idealised so as to make beautiful works of art with handsome human bodies showing against a background of leaves and flowers. A good example of realism is M. Cormon's picture of "Cain," at present in the gallery of the Luxembourg.

It is an illustration of travelling in prehistoric times. An old man (who may be Cain or any other) wanders through a country as yet uninhabited at the head of his family and folk. They have the rudest and most primitive means of transport, even the most elementary wheeled conveyance not being as yet invented, and they do not appear to have subjugated animals for burden. They are tramping from one nameless place to another nameless place over the roadless, unmeasured earth. This is the true pathos of the distant past. In a work of this class there is no idealisation of form, neither is there any attempt to lend a charm to the picture which must have been lacking to the reality, but there is a field for great vigour of conception and execution, and there is nothing to prevent excellence in composition. M. Cormon's picture, which is on a very large scale, is executed with a kind of rudeness very much in harmony with the absence of all soft civilisation in the subject. On the contrary, when the motive of a design is pleasantly ideal, as, for example, the innocent, beautiful life of the first human pair in Paradise, it is natural that the painting should be refined and delicate. So it is in the picture of Adam and Eve by Palma Vecchio, in the Brunswick Museum, in which the forms and attitudes of the nude figures are as graceful as possible, and the colouring very rich and mellow, with that kind of amenity in execution which makes painting acceptable for itself.[1]

The belief that Man has an animal origin might affect the pursuit of the ideal in one of two opposite ways. It might, in some minds, discourage it altogether, and induce them to content themselves with a low interpretation of human forms as but little above the brute. In others, on the contrary, the very knowledge of the close connection between human and brute form might lead to a more emphatic representation of those qualities which are furthest from the lower animals. For example, in certain faces there are still very striking simian characteristics. A man may have eyes placed like a monkey's eyes, and with an expression startling by its resemblance to the quick and cunning look of a baboon; or he may have a low, retreating forehead and a prognathous jaw, reminding one forcibly of a gorilla. In dealing with human beings of this unfortunate class, who preserve in themselves but too plainly a record of "the descent of Man," the artist with a keen zest for what is characteristic might be tempted to insist upon, and even exaggerate, the signs indicating a survival of the brutish nature; whilst, on the contrary, the artist who looks for what is most human and most advanced in humanity

[1] "La carnation est ambrée et dorée, surtout dans la personne d'Adam; le ton est un peu plus délicat dans le corps d'Eve. Les figures se détachent en lumière avec leurs ombres moëlleuses et mystérieuses contre le feuillage du fond."—VOSMAER. This picture has been beautifully engraved by Unger.

will avoid the simian characteristics when he meets with them, and seek always for the highest beauty. One matter deserves notice in connection with this subject, as a curious indication of the desire common amongst artists to elevate man as much as possible above the brutish level. Man is often represented without clothes, and in pictures of the nude he is invariably painted as a hairless animal. He is, no doubt, much less hairy than a gorilla, but when artists represent him as hairless they are idealising by the suppression of a brutish characteristic. The fact is that the hairiness of men differs greatly with different races, and also with different individuals. Europeans are a hairy race, and many of them have thick hair on the breast, on the shoulders, under the armpits, and on the arms and legs, so that when the man is dark he is blackened by his hair, though not equally nor all over. The tacit consent of artists to omit this and paint the skin only (what artists call "flesh") may have been simply a matter of taste, but it is difficult to avoid the inference that they have been guided by an instinctive repugnance to hairiness as a mark of kinship with the brute. Darwin looked upon this hairiness as probably due to a partial reversion to an earlier stage of existence. Elsewhere he said, "There can be little doubt that the hairs thus scattered over the body are the rudiments of the uniform hairy coat of the lower animals." He observed also that "idiots are often very hairy," and that "they are apt to revert in other characters to a lower animal type."

The dominant tendency of the fine arts is to look forward to a higher development of man, especially in physical form. It is possible that this utterance in art and literature of the human desire for a better and more noble condition may be the foreshadowing of a future realisation in life itself. In the literature of the past we find frequent expression of the human longing to overcome impediments of space and time by rapid travel and the instantaneous communication of thought, a longing which is now most amply satisfied. In social matters the dissatisfaction with what was then the present, which animated most of the considerable thinkers of the eighteenth century, has been followed by a partial realisation of their dreams. I am optimist enough to believe that what are called ideals may be in many cases an anticipation of a future reality. All literature of the higher kind represents stronger and nobler thinking than that which is now common in human intercourse; perhaps this may be an anticipation of a future when people will think more vigorously and express themselves more clearly and eloquently than they do now. We have only to suppose an improvement in the constitution of the brain for such an advance to be actually realised. And as to those ideals of bodily form which sculptors and painters set before

us, we have but to imagine, as a consequence of wiser living, a steady physical improvement during Nature's great spaces of time for such ideals to be equalled in living men. The main difference, then, between a scientific and a pre-scientific age is likely to be that, whilst the pre-scientific mind looked to the past for its ideals, or imagined them as belonging to the past, a scientific age will look to the future and have the inspiration of hope rather than that of a frequently delusive retrospect. Or, if the artists of the future look to the past, still it will be in the purely poetical spirit which in our own day has led the most famous poets of the age to choose their subjects in antique or mediæval history or legend. In short, there is but little reason to apprehend that the Darwinian account of the Descent of Man, however generally accepted, can have much practical effect upon the fine arts, which will naturally try to embody some kind of ideal, whether it be suggested by a poetical interest in the legendary past or by a scientific hope for the illimitable future.

CHAPTER II

THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN ART AND ARCHÆOLOGY

THESE two pursuits are in their nature entirely distinct. It is possible to be a great artist without knowing anything accurately about the past, and we have evidence in the life and work of many contemporaries that a high degree of archæological learning is compatible, not only with practical incapacity in art, but even with a complete want of critical understanding of the artistic aspects of things, so that the archæologist may be as remote, in reality, from art as if he were a civil engineer, though he frequently concerns himself with architecture, sculpture, and various kinds of graphic art, especially mural painting, illustration, and gem-engraving. Archæology is a pursuit by itself like law, and as a lawyer may be concerned in cases relating to the sale of pictures which involve questions of date and authenticity, so the archæologist has frequently to take cognisance of things which happen to be works of art, but the interest of them, for him, is in the degree of light which they happen accidentally to throw upon the dates of past events, or the manners and customs of our ancestors.

I wish to establish this distinction clearly, because this is one of those cases in which there is an almost inevitable confusion of interests and purposes. I have known a certain number of archæologists, and I happen to have lived for many years in a neighbourhood where archæology is the prevalent pursuit amongst intelligent men. It happens, too, that I have a turn that way myself strong enough to give me a quite unaffected interest in the discoveries of specialists, and to establish between them and me the kind of sympathy which exists between those who know and one who is willing to learn. Now, I remember an English archæologist, no longer living, who used to maintain the thesis that as each period of history had its own forms of art, it was wrong to attempt any revival. His desire was for each epoch to keep its mark, and this seems reasonable till we come to the application. The domestic architecture and the furniture of that time were

both at the lowest possible ebb. There was no idea prevalent but those of physical comfort and material convenience. Art, in the higher sense, was simply dead. The somewhat barbaric richness of the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages was in the remote past, the meagre yet harmonious elegance of Queen Anne's time was almost equally far from the heavy and stupid present. And yet it was proposed, and by an archæologist, to maintain that present in its dulness, and to learn nothing from the artists and workmen of more inventive and intelligent ages. The truth was that my friend looked upon all modern carved oak, for example, as a counterfeit. He would buy a carved cabinet if it were three hundred years old, but his idea was that as the art of carving in oak belonged to a past epoch the attempt to revive it in our time was no better than a kind of forgery. Here we have an instance of the archæological instinct jealous for the past and willing, rather, that an art should be completely dead than that it should live in rivalry with its own earlier productions. But, from the artistic point of view, if a work has good qualities of design and execution the date of it is a matter of indifference, and an artist is always willing to learn from the past, and to adopt old methods if they are excellent. The best modern sculpture, that of the French school, is founded avowedly on that of ancient Greece. Sculpture is a revived art, etching is a revived art, architecture is a revived art. Even literature itself owes most of its present clearness and method to the revival of classical studies at the Renascence. In a word, from the artistic point of view, all human effort seems to take place rather in one great continuous present, than with that sharp distinction between past and present which prevails in the mind of an archæologist. In the artistic sense the ancient Greeks are much nearer to us than the ancient Britons. The revival of etching has put many of us in such perfect sympathy with Rembrandt that he seems almost to be living amongst us.

Now, suppose the artistic and archæological instincts to be united in the same person, what must be the consequences of the union? The archæologist has his special interest in the past which must give him a keen delight in the representation of it, and the artist comes with his strong sense of ever present life which must give a vitality to the work, beyond the range of the purely antiquarian imagination. The question is what do we really know about the past, and how far is a painted restoration of it possible? Our knowledge of *persons* in the past is exceedingly limited; we have not many portraits before the time of Holbein, and the few we have are limited to personages of importance, nor were their portraits taken frequently enough for us to have them at all periods of their lives, besides which we are not sure of the likeness when the artist is scarcely able to

draw. Our knowledge of *events* appears considerable so long as we read history, but when we come to pictorial illustration we realise the insufficiency of authentic data. There is, however, an art of reviving the past without pretending either to the portraiture of personages or the illustration of particular events. The artist may propose to himself, in general terms, such a task as the illustration of life in the thirteenth century, and then accumulate all attainable data for matters of architecture, furniture, utensils, manners and customs, and temporary fashions in dress. The evidence on all these subjects is abundant. We know with considerable accuracy how the people of the thirteenth century lived, and the character of all the objects that surrounded them. We have evidence from miniatures that the attitudes and gestures of people in the Middle Ages were much the same as our own. The human body has undergone no essential change since the time of the Crusades, and therefore a skilful artist of the present day can paint a crusader much more truthfully than any of his own contemporaries could have painted him. Owing to our more scientific knowledge of light-and-shade, we can represent the interior of a thirteenth-century cathedral better than the architect who built it. Our modern study of texture and colour makes us better able to represent the rich costumes of the Middle Ages than the miniature painters who have recorded them for us in their simple and primitive manner. There is not a piece of armour that any modern student would not interpret with more visual truth than primitive draughtsmen who saw armour worn every day. As to external nature—the sky, the fields, the trees, the waves of the sea—all that is represented in our contemporary art with a fidelity unattainable in ages when the knowledge of effect was a science beyond the intellect of the time. Even simple sunshine was quite beyond the power of the mediæval artist. He could, indeed, nominally place his crusader in Syria, but he could not surround him with the Syrian light. That can be done to-day. Our modern study of nature has enabled us to paint the sunshine of six hundred years ago with a veracity unknown to those who enjoyed or suffered from its warmth. I have shown elsewhere that pictorial art is inferior to literary art in the domain of history, because it has to affirm too much when little is positively known, a difficulty that the literary historian evades by precautions in the use of language. The advantage is on the side of the painter when instead of historical events the theme of his picture is simply the life of the past. He is not, like the novelist, obliged to make his personages talk. This is the inevitable cause of unsatisfactoriness in the historical novel. The people *must* talk, yet the novelist cannot make them use the language of their time, first because of his own imperfect knowledge of it, and

secondly because it would not be intelligible to his readers. The language used by the painter is that of facial expression and gesture. Now, we have fairly abundant evidence in the rude art of the Middle Ages that expression and gesture differed little, if at all, from what we observe around us in the present day. People laughed and wept as they do now; astonishment, pleasure, hope, fear, produced the same changes in the countenance. Even so far back as ancient Greece, laughter caused exactly the same muscular tensions as in the nineteenth century—witness the "Laughing Satyr" in the present volume. The art of painting may therefore be considered peculiarly happy in its right of silence when representing the human intercourse of past ages, since the intercourse that it does represent is, so far as it goes, authentic. The historical novelist is not only sure to be wrong about language, but he is almost inevitably false in attributing modern sentiments to generations that could not have understood them. Changes of sentiment occur even from one generation to another. Some of us have known people who still retained the sentiments of the eighteenth century, and we may remember that it was somewhat difficult for us to converse with them except by perpetually re-adjusting our mental apparatus. Had they lived to the present day, our children would have considered them as remote as foreigners. Yet it is far more within the limits of probability to attribute an old-fashioned sentiment to the present generation than a modern one to a generation that is long past, for the old sentiment may possibly linger on, whilst the modern one can never be projected backwards across the chasms of death.

The pictorial restoration of the past has the advantage over architectural restoration that it never involves the least destruction of anything that the past has bequeathed to us. The painter is an entirely innocent restorer; he can injure nothing but his own picture. The architect has the double character of creator and destroyer; he destroys the work of his predecessors to substitute his own work in its place, and this he has always done, even in ages that we erroneously look upon as more conservative than ours.

It is an English habit to look to the fine arts for something beyond themselves, for some kind of instruction, or for a moral lesson. This habit, more than any other, has kept the English mind outside of artistic sympathies, because Art, as such, has no purpose outside of itself, and exists in complete independence of moral excellence and historical truth. The proof that it does so is plain. The public and private galleries of Europe contain many works that are archæologically wrong, and that neither preach nor teach. On the other hand, we have many accurate

THE EDUCATION OF GIL BLAS

DRAWN BY DANIEL VIERGE

REPRODUCED IN HÉLIOGRAVURE BY P. DUJARDIN

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THE original drawing is in Indian Ink and Chinese White. The reproduction is remarkably perfect and acknowledged to be so by the artist.

The subject illustrated is the first chapter of the story where we are told that Gil Blas in his early boyhood had an uncle, a canon named Gil Perez, who taught him to read. "Fancy a little man about three feet and a half high, of an extraordinary fatness, with his head sunk between his shoulders, that's my uncle. He was an ecclesiastic who thought of nothing but good living." The education of Gil Blas was advantageous to his uncle also, for by teaching his nephew to read he himself became much more skilful in that art, which he had greatly neglected.

This illustration gives us two types of the human being entirely distinct from everything else in the volume, the fat short man, and a very genuine boy who would rather be playing marbles than learning his letters.

The drawing is also valuable as a revival of the past. Vierge is extremely careful not to introduce anything that is not of the country and the time. Of living revivers of other days he is one of the most learned and conscientious.

IMP. GRAVURE WITTMANN, PARIS

antiquarian drawings that nobody would propose to hang in a national collection, and it has been found advisable to remove Cruikshank's temperance picture, "The Bottle," from the vestibule of the National Gallery, though the lesson it conveyed was unimpeachable, whilst pictures of tippling Dutchmen are hung in places of honour, and Silenus may be downright drunk if only Rubens has painted him. Therefore archæology and morals have no necessary connection with art, but if the English public must have something along with art, as some Frenchmen take dissolved gum with their absinthe, there is nothing that mixes with it so happily as sound and accurate archæology. This science has the advantage of providing vast quantities of material which may be, at the same time, strange to us and harmonious, for the taste of any single age insures a kind of harmony in its productions. As for the artist himself, there is no study outside of visible nature likely to add so much to the interest of his own existence as an intelligent investigation of some past age that he has chosen for his own particular field. The archæological painter loses absolutely nothing as an artist by his study of the human past, whilst as a man he gains something like those advantages that we literary students have gained from our "humanities." He selects an epoch, and studies it with a closeness of attention that brings the usual reward of study. It may be doubted whether one artist could assimilate many different epochs. Each of us has certain affinities which give an ideal admittance to the past, but only to that past which the affinities themselves determine. M. Maurice Leloir, whose illustrations of Sterne are unrivalled as a revival of the eighteenth century in all its details, declined a commission that I desired to give him because it required the study of another age. He said that he had been so completely absorbed by his chosen epoch as to have no disposition to go back to an earlier one. For him the France of the eighteenth century has become a living reality; he sees the life in the inns and streets, and the travelling on the roads, without the intervention of any object belonging to his own age. It is only after some reflection that we can begin to realise the enormous work of elimination that this involves. The eighteenth century is so near to us that it includes a thousand things that we possess, but always in other forms; for example, if a pin were large enough to be represented, it would be necessary to bear in mind that a pin's head was not made then as it is now. And we have so many things that our grandfathers had never imagined, all which the artist has to forget! For all those things which he does represent he requires such a sense of construction that he can go back beyond the best way of constructing things to an earlier, clumsier and more imperfect way, and yet he must construct quite well

according to that way. M. Leloir is a wonderful eighteenth-century coach-builder. I believe he makes no mistakes in the hanging of his vehicles, or in the relative thicknesses of the parts, and here the necessity for forgetting is the greater that scientific intelligence has only been applied to carriage-building within very recent times. Now, this strong sense of construction is a faculty that all successful archæological painters have in common, whatever the period which they attempt to recall into existence. Mr. Alma Tadema has it both in his pictures and in the world of reality. He takes a great delight in things and understands them; his own house is very interesting and original, and everything in it has been a subject of thought and appreciation for him, if not of direct invention. This enjoyment of reality in construction is carried by the artist into those classic times which he has resuscitated for us. The ancient Romans were extremely fond of various marbles, which they brought from great distances to adorn their villas and palaces, even in remote colonies in Gaul. It is much for an artist who attempts to revive the past to have in his own idiosyncrasy the tastes of the vanished race, and how much this sympathy as to material things has done for the truth and interest, as well as beauty, of Mr. Tadema's work may be understood by a reference to those historical painters, such as Hilton, who do not seem to have had any enjoyment of the visible qualities of substances, nor any appreciation of skill and ingenuity in construction. Indeed there was a time when it was considered beneath the dignity of historical art to show any intelligent interest in these things, as if it were possible to give a truthful idea of any past generation of mankind without faithfully painting its surroundings!

The work of the archæological painter, when taken seriously, requires a degree of self-restraint that increases with the progress of knowledge. In the earlier half of the present century, when an artist chose to represent some ancient city of which we know little more than the name, some Nineveh, Carthage, or Babylon, he considered it a legitimate opportunity for allowing full liberty to an exuberant imagination, and piled up edifices to the skies in almost any style that suited his fancy, and with a complete forgetfulness of the common necessities of human existence. Yet in the magnificent cities of antiquity the population had to be lodged, somehow, as in the London of our own day, and it is not more reasonable to make Rome or Carthage an accumulation of imposing architectural projects than it would be to put together in one view the public buildings of London, much exaggerated and idealised, with the Marble Arch in the foreground, but no dwellings for the ordinary inhabitants. It is not long since we have

understood, in a general way, the laying-out of a Roman city or a Gaulish oppidum, nor is it, even yet, very easy for us to realise the life in the narrow straight streets of the Roman town, crossing each other like a chess-board, with the low and simple habitations of the common people. It is the common everyday life of plain folks that offers the greatest difficulty. Even amongst magnificent things our knowledge has a way of stopping short when we are eager for thoroughness and completeness. It is probable that Mr. Poynter's "Israel in Egypt" is a fairly accurate representation of slavery in that country during the erection of the great buildings, but when he undertook to restore for us the "royal house" of Solomon in detail, as it was when the Queen of Sheba came to admire it, even Mr. Poynter's industry and learning must have largely waited for his invention. No one knows the toil involved by those revivals. The cerebral strain of trying to imagine Florentine life in the time of Savonarola nearly killed George Eliot, and left her with a permanent feeling of having greatly aged. Mr. Cross says, "The writing of *Romola* ploughed into her more than any of her other books. She told me she could put a finger on it as marking a well-defined transition in her life. In her own words—'I began it a young woman; I finished it an old woman.'" In painting, the work of restoration is easier when the age to be represented has already been well illustrated by men who themselves belonged to it. In this manner Hogarth has given us an insight into the eighteenth century which ensures a kind of authenticity to later representations of that time. The abundance of French illustrations of the eighteenth century has enabled Meissonier to perpetuate it in such excellent pictures as that entitled "Une Lecture chez Diderot," which admits us to Diderot's library amongst his literary friends.

The conclusion is that so long as art does not pretend to be exactly historical, in the representation of particular incidents for which the artist cannot have adequate data, it is possible to represent the past with such a degree of exactness as may make the attempt interesting and instructive; but that the alliance between archæology and art, however permissible and natural in a learned age, is still only an alliance between pursuits absolutely distinct in their character, though they may work harmoniously together. The only artistic advantage of archæology is that it provides materials which have a certain freshness until the public has got accustomed to them, and which may have a peculiar beauty not to be found in the external life of the present. So long as art itself shall be understood, no picture that is well composed and skilfully painted will be rejected for an archæological blunder, nor will bad pictures fetch high prices for their historical accuracy. Those who wish to see the fine arts made useful for educational purposes,

as an accompaniment to the labours of educational writers, may rejoice in a movement which certainly supplies us with more accurate ideas about the past. The movement is interesting to art-criticism as a confirmation of the theory that the fine arts of every age have a tendency to rise up to the level of its scientific attainments.

CHAPTER III

DIGNIFIED AND RATIONAL VIEWS OF HISTORICAL ART

HISTORICAL painting, formerly considered to be the most dignified of all the forms of art, was at the same time one of the least popular and least remunerative. The notion of dignity may have been a consolation for the want of worldly success, as we see in those offices which are honourable but ill-paid, or which are so costly that they leave the holder out of pocket, whilst they gratify the human desire for importance. According to the unintelligent classification of artists by the nature of their subjects rather than the quality of their work, the historical painter stood proudly at the head of his profession, and very much apart from the rest, who were supposed to be occupied in inferior branches. All paintings that represent the human figure are divided into two classes—history and genre. According to the strict French classification, even portrait is included in genre, and so is all representation of contemporary life. It is one of the misfortunes of a writer on art that he sometimes unwittingly gives offence by the unfortunate employment of a word. I once called a deceased historical painter a figure-painter; this brought me an angry letter from his son, whose sense of the family importance was deeply wounded. "Sir," he said, "you have called my father a figure-painter, whereas he was *an historical painter*!" I wrote humbly in reply and said that I meant nothing derogatory to the dignity of history, but only that the deceased artist must have studied the human figure, or else he could not have painted history at all.

I am inclined to believe that the dignity of history must go the way of many other dignities in an age of criticism like ours. The oddest peculiarity about it was its connection with the painter's ignorance of his own subjects. If he represented personages whom he had never seen, and events that he had only read about in books—the books themselves having usually been written when the actors had lain for two or three centuries in their graves—then he was "an historical painter," but if he painted per-

sonages of equal historical importance that he could see alive, surrounded by their own families and their own furniture, then he was only a painter of "genre," which was held to be an inferior department of art.

The plain truth is that there is no reason whatever, in the nature of things, for exalting what is called "historical painting" above genre. The greater part of it is not historical at all, but imaginary in the sense of having no basis, not imaginative in the sense of being a noble exercise of the imagination. The first essential of history is not that it should be showy or dignified, but that it should be true. Written history can be true with slender materials, because language never compels us to go beyond our knowledge (one of the most precious advantages of writing as an art) whereas you cannot do anything in painting that is to be historically accurate without such an amount of documentary evidence as it is hardly possible to get together. The first necessity is a supply of authentic portraits, then you want endless archæological details, and when you think you have got everything that is necessary to give an appearance of truth plausible enough to baffle the sharp criticism of the present age, you are still painfully aware that your representation of the event is not accurate enough to be recognised by an eye-witness. You do not really know what dresses the personages wore, nor what their furniture was, nor their relative positions in a room. If you knew all this, the probability is that you would find the group of figures entirely unpictorial, and that either you would abstain from painting it, or make up your mind to a conscious violation of the truth. This is why historical writing, though seldom wholly satisfactory to any but an uncritical reader who can take everything on trust, is still, nevertheless, far less discouraging to a lover of truth than historical painting, although the two forms of history are suggested by precisely the same need or instinct in the human mind—the desire to resuscitate the past and to know more about it than can ever be really known. To understand the vanity of this desire, we have only to imagine the case of some very ancient family whose history has to be written and also painted in the present day. Even if the family has preserved abundant records of itself, the enterprise is still a difficult one, because there are sure to be periods of its history for which the records fail. Still, the writing historian can substitute a name for a person, and almost produce the illusion that the person is known, when in reality it is the name only that is known, whilst even the very meagreness of the materials themselves allows a skilful historian to occupy some pages with critical estimates of their value, or an exposition of their worthlessness. Meanwhile the painting historian, though animated by the same desire to throw light upon the past, finds

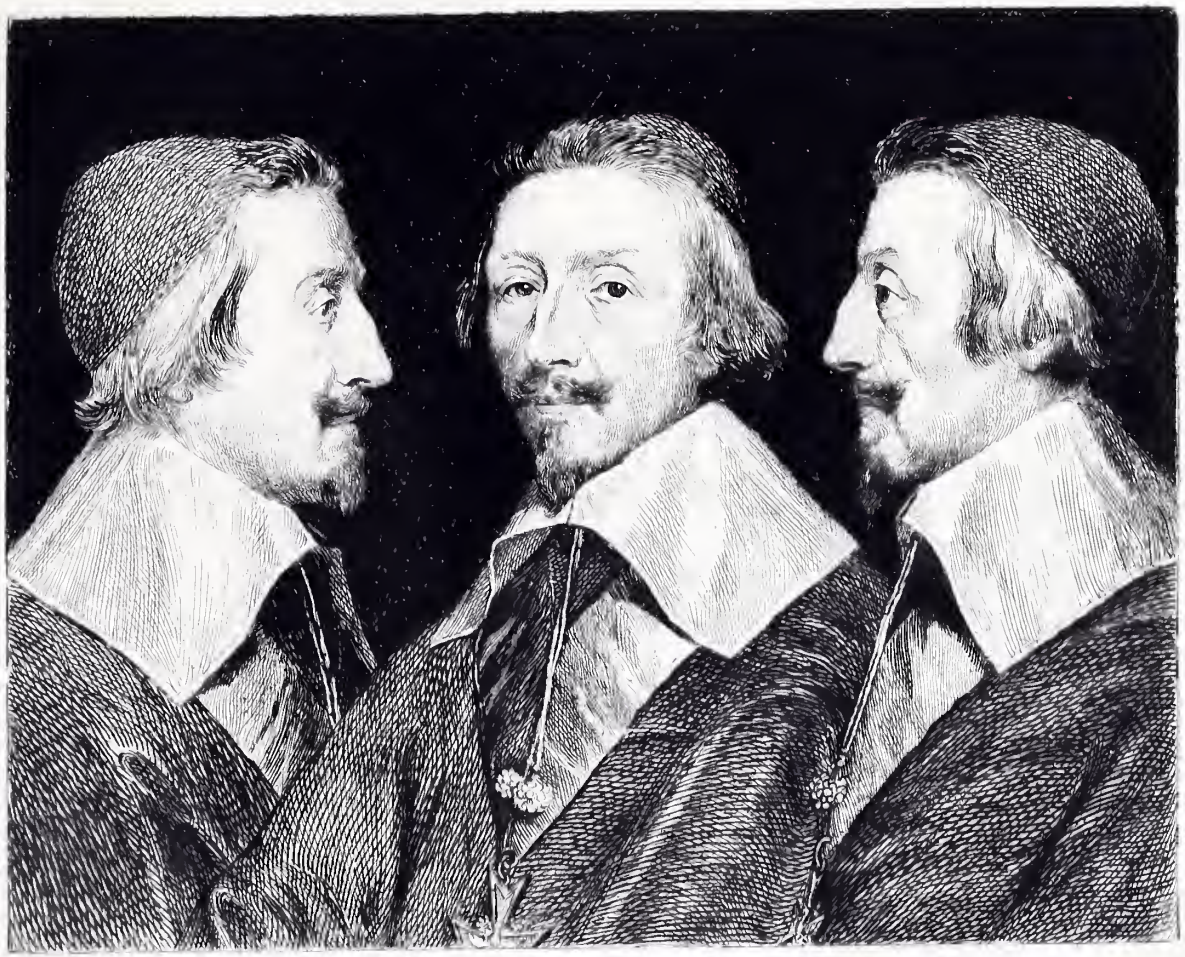
THREE PORTRAITS OF CARDINAL DE RICHELIEU

PAINTED BY PHILIPPE DE CHAMPAIGNE

ETCHED BY C. O. MURRAY

(*National Gallery*)

THIS is in various ways a very interesting picture. It shows the full face (or nearly so) and the two profiles, which, as the reader perceives, are not exactly alike. Painters have seldom been tempted to represent the whole man in this way, the fatal objection being that we cannot help seeing three persons instead of one. I chose this picture as an example of the relation between the profile and the full face, which in many cases are so different that nobody who had only seen one could truly imagine the other. Besides this, these portraits are valuable as instances of the extreme difficulty there is in representing mind by means of the graphic arts. Surely no one who was not told would suppose from these portraits that the original had been the most astute and the most powerful minister of his age. It is the face of a cultivated gentleman, of a prelate who knew the world, but that is all that the portrait itself has to tell us about its extraordinary subject. For the rest, we must go to the writing historians.



himself compelled either to affirm more than he knows, or to omit entire generations from the painted history. And even when the materials for the painter are abundant (which very rarely happens, and only for recent centuries), the peculiar exigencies of his art compel him to deal with them in a very arbitrary manner. His picture must be a composed picture, yet if there is anything concerning the past about which we can be perfectly certain it is that when our ancestors met together in the council-chamber or the battlefield they had something else to think about than to extend their arms and legs in the way most suitable for a *tableau vivant*.

For these reasons, I have no hesitation in saying that of all the varieties of graphic art that which is usually called "historical painting"—the art which professes to represent long-past events—is for me the most nearly destitute of interest. It may, however, sometimes be possible, under very exceptional circumstances, to represent with considerable truth, a period not yet very remote from our own, on condition that there are still survivors who can be referred to on matters of detail. When Stanfield painted his picture of "The Victory towed into Gibraltar after the battle of Trafalgar," there were naval men still surviving who gave the painter very precise information as to the exact condition of the ship. The condition of the rigging is, in the picture, exactly what it was in the reality. As for the hull, the painter could refer to the ship itself, and the rock of Gibraltar with the rest of the landscape was simply a study from nature. I have been told by a sailor who had been an eye-witness that the carpenters suspended at work upon the ship's starboard quarter were actually in that place at the time. There is consequently nothing not absolutely historical in the picture except the group of boats in the foreground, and these amount to little more than a general statement that there were boats about Gibraltar whose occupants would, no doubt, be interested in a victorious man-of-war. Here, then, we have a genuine historical picture, but the reader will observe that the artist avoided most of the difficulties attendant upon a painter of men. The sailors in the *Victory* are so distant that their faces cannot be seen. We are told that the body of Nelson is on board, but when we look at the picture this is, for us, a mere matter of imagination.

The most conscientious of modern historical painters was Meissonier. He had once finished a picture of Napoleon in a grenadier's costume, when he invited an old servant of the Emperor to look at it, and asked the man for a criticism. The likeness affected him even to tears, but he had a word to say about the costume. "His Majesty wore more frequently the tunic of a *chasseur* than that of a *grenadier*, and he never would consent to unfasten his epaulettes. His overcoats were made large about the shoulders

on that account." Meissonier had represented the epaulettes as brought forward on the breast, and the overcoat as fitting the shoulders, so he destroyed the costume and painted it carefully over again. The famous picture entitled "1814" represents the Emperor riding with his Marshals during the retreat in Russia. The sky is gray in the picture, and the snow is on the ground. Whilst the artist was at work upon it the weather about his own house happened to be exactly of that kind, so he dressed himself like the Emperor, mounted on a saddle, and by the help of a mirror got the exact values of the costume against the sky with the effect of the light from the snow. Meissonier neglected no opportunity for getting information from contemporaries of the great Emperor, and spared neither trouble nor expense in collecting costumes and accoutrements, or in having them made. He was equally studious of all natural truths that could add to the veracity of his representations. No one has been more laborious in the study of horses. To understand the gallop, the painter had a railway made in his own grounds, on which he could keep close to a galloping horse to observe its muscular action. His love of truth went so far that he denied himself that cheap display of power which is managed by making warriors physically formidable, and which was constantly resorted to in the spurious "historical painting" of other times. Meissonier's soldiers are not more athletic than men commonly are in reality; their chests (see that of Marshal Duroc in "1807") are often narrow and flat, their legs and arms not muscular enough to fill their clothes; but they are always either animated by the ardour of battle, or sustained by that patience which is the passive side of military courage, and of which the soldiers of Napoleon gave ample proof, in Russia and elsewhere.

Meissonier lived, with regard to the Napoleonic epoch, at as great a distance from it as it is safe for the historical painter to be from his chosen subjects, yet he was born three years before Waterloo. The truth of his pictures is due in great part to the abundance of documentary material which the time of the First Empire has left to us in the way of portraits and descriptions, but it would never have been complete if Meissonier had been unable to interrogate contemporaries. His picture of "Napoleon III. at Solferino" is not less historical in reality than his "1814," but it is not called so, because the artist was himself a contemporary. What will that signify in a hundred years? what does it signify even now? Solferino is as much a page of past history as Waterloo, though Meissonier had the opportunity of making studies from the life.

Of this truest kind of historical painting which represents contemporary events, we have a recent and excellent example in Mr. Lockhart's "Jubilee

Service in Westminster Abbey." It may be worth while to consider the conditions under which this picture was painted, as they throw a vivid light upon the needs of an artist who endeavours to be historically accurate. In the first place, the picture was decided upon *before the event*, and not two or three centuries after it. "On the day of the ceremony," Mr. Lockhart says, "I was allowed to make a sort of studio in one of the doorways which open on to the altar. A window was made for me at the top of the door, through which I obtained a splendid view of the Abbey, and yet I remained unseen. I had an ample stock of notebooks and colours."

During the whole of the ceremony Mr. Lockhart was busy taking the most rapid memoranda, as a landscape painter takes notes of an effulgent sunset—that is, in *artistic shorthand*, pencil scrawls and blots of colour intelligible only to himself. "As the crowd took their places I made hasty records of the masses of colour. I made hundreds of shorthand notes, not attempting for a moment to secure portraits, which would have been impossible, but getting positions and groupings. During the whole of the ceremony I was hard at work making mere impressions of the colours without attempting anything more definite."[1]

The next thing was to get a ground plan of the Abbey, with the place allotted to every one. Then came an oil sketch of the whole scene, arranged synthetically from the water-colour blots as a complete picture. So much for colour and general arrangement, but the picture could not be painted without form also, and to attain this the artist made a cartoon of its full size in pencil, every portrait carefully drawn from studies made whenever possible from the life. He was often aided, as to costume, by working from the dresses themselves, and when they had been altered he was helped by minutely accurate descriptions.

With all this assistance, and all these opportunities, Mr. Lockhart found his task by no means an easy one. He had a correspondence of a thousand letters. There were considerable difficulties about the foreigners present at the ceremony, but these, he says, "were slowly overcome." The success of the picture is due to three conditions very rarely united in the production of historical works—firstly, the utmost readiness in a multitude of persons to give every possible assistance to the artist; secondly, the abundance of materials still in existence; and thirdly, a spirit of foresight and promptitude in the painter himself which enabled him to seize upon every opportunity. No artist could have worked his way through such an enterprise without the qualities of a man of business.

This conscientiousness in historical art is a great virtue when materials

[1] This account was given by Mr. Lockhart himself to a correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

are accessible, but virtues are of use only when there are opportunities for exercising them, and the spirit of research is a useless virtue when it is condemned to a forced inaction. Even for such a subject as Munkacsy's "Milton dictating *Paradise Lost* to his Daughters" research can get no further than a revival in past fashions in furniture and dress. Romney, in his picture, spared himself that trouble by reducing both to the most extreme simplicity. He knew that the poet was not rich, so the furniture is as plain as possible—a chair, a table, two stools, and a bare wall behind them. Milton is wrapped from head to foot in the folds of a large cloak; his daughters are covered but not dressed. In Munkacsy's picture the interior is picturesque and rather comfortable, it is not unlike a corner of an artist's studio in the present day, with carved oak furniture and a carpet. Romney's conception is, to my feeling, the finer of the two; his Milton is not without grandeur; the Milton of Munkacsy is thoughtful, but his form is too small and shrivelled; it has no reminiscence of the manly beauty of his prime. As to truth of surroundings and costume, Romney feels that he knows nothing and tries to say as little as possible, but even that reticence may be wrong. Milton's furniture may not have been quite so extremely simple, or his wall so bare; there may have been a bookcase, or perhaps a picture, behind him. Well, Munkacsy has felt this, and has not given us bare walls, but he does not really know what Milton's rooms were like. Both artists have to venture on a guess with regard to the daughters, who were probably quite unlike the young women in either picture, yet authentic portraits of the daughters were indispensable to the historical value of the representation.

Criticism of this kind may be considered too matter-of-fact, and I may be told that I give no place to the imagination. We will take imagination into account in another chapter, but as for the present we are concerned with the purely historical side of art, in which fact is of the first importance, I may be excused for giving it a somewhat close and rigorous attention. When painting claims to be historical, it must submit itself to a kind of criticism from which works of independent invention are exempt. What is commonly called "historical painting" does not really answer to history in literature; it only claims to do so, and the claim is not well founded. "Historical painting" has its literary equivalent in the historical novel, which tries to borrow an interest outside of art by giving a closer view of personages that genuine history leaves in the distance. Now, in the historical novel it is just this closeness of view that is *un*historical—or, in other words, the very element which causes these novels to be called historical is their *un*historical element. The genuine historian, in modern

times, when history is differentiated from fiction, takes as much pains to make us conscious of our ignorance of the past as he does to increase our knowledge of it. His work has two sides, a positive and a negative, and the quality that distinguishes him from the idle story-teller is not the creative faculty but the critical. The good modern historian tries to ascertain as much as he can about the past, and states that, but he also labours to distinguish between the known, the doubtful, and the fabulous or fictitious. There is no such discrimination in the graphic art which is undeservedly called "historical." If it merited the title it would present to us what is known, and omit the unknown; but painting cannot do that, because to leave blank spaces in a canvas is in itself a kind of falsity; neither can painting say that a thing is possible, yet doubtful.

The conclusion is that the art of painting is not suitable for dealing with what are usually called historical subjects, and that it only becomes interesting in this way when it represents either the present, or a past so near to the present that the materials are still abundant. It is astonishing, too, how rapidly the materials begin to lose themselves in the oblivion of the past. Some readers may remember how, in the French Chamber, Gambetta (with one of those sudden inspirations of eloquence that belonged to his perfervid genius) replied to a member of the Right by springing to his feet and crying, as he pointed to Thiers, "Le voilà, le libérateur du Territoire!" Gambetta carried the whole House with him, and the incident had a real historical importance, besides being in the highest degree dramatic, as the aged statesman sat in his place, pale, and profoundly affected. Well, I should say that we have here a very noble subject for a genuine historical picture, and it was painted by M. Jules Garnier, and exhibited in the Salon of 1878, all the figures being authentic portraits. It would be most difficult to paint an incident of that kind, with equal veracity, when the actors were all dead. Even already, that Chamber has for the most part passed away into a land from which no eloquence can reach us, and where the thin voice of Thiers and the thunder of Gambetta are lost in an equality of silence.

CHAPTER IV

IMAGINATION IN HISTORICAL PAINTING

IF history were one of the romantic arts, the action of the imagination might be almost unlimited; but as it belongs entirely to science, the imagination is only free to work in it as it does in other sciences—that is, in the discovery or exposition of what is certainly or probably true. I see clearly how this can be done within due limits by the historian who writes, but am unable to conceive imaginative action of this scientific kind in any work of the historical painter that can be considered strictly legitimate. I do not see how the historical painter is to tell us without the help of a written explanation, which is seldom given, and would be outside of his own art, what is authentic in his work and what is merely conjectural. The kind of provisional synthesis by which the mind embraces more than what is known is, I think, denied to the painter, not as a thinking man, but as a workman in a narrowly limited craft. If a painter were, for example, to paint all the conjectural part of his work in monochrome and the ascertained facts in colour, the picture would not be complete as a work of art, and even if this were admissible, it would not be a solution of the difficulty when conjecture and invention pervade the entire performance. The only office of the imagination which I hold to be perfectly legitimate in historical painting is that which gives life and action to personages whose authentic portraits we already possess, and which shows us their surroundings when we have sufficient data for an accurate restoration. The function of the painter is here one that nobody else can fill. He alone can make the dead live and move before our eyes in the gloom or sunshine of long past years. We may quite believe that an artist with a strong gift of imagination may see Henry VIII. as he played at tennis, or Charles I. as he walked to his execution. Still, even in the representation of past events for which we have ample data, the imagination cannot properly permit itself much liberty beyond its single business of resuscitation. If it enriches a scene with much

exuberance of invention, it is going beyond its task, and passing from historical science to historical romance. We are compelled then to accept two conclusions, of which the first is that the historical painter cannot do his proper work without imagination, and the second, that he cannot allow his imagination anything like free play, consequently he is in a false position as an artist. If he were to take up his true position as an artist he would sacrifice truth of narrative to his own convenience in picture-making, and then he could no longer be the scientific historian. Historical painting is therefore what a French critic would call *un genre faux*—that is to say, a kind of art which attempts to serve two incompatible principles.

There is an analogous case in landscape. About the middle of the present century a few young English artists attempted pure topography in landscape, but their works were judged in the usual way on the principles of artistic criticism, so that they and their art were in a false position. Not that topographic landscape-painting is in itself a *genre faux*, as its own principle is soundly scientific; but when it is condemned for the absence of artistic qualities, and attempts to add them to itself, then it becomes a *genre faux*, because it tries to unite incompatible merits. You may have topography or you may have art; you cannot have both at the same time.

In every conflict of this kind it is always art that carries the day, because art has imagination on its side with all its power and charm.

What we all habitually do with regard to historical painting is to accept or reject it on artistic grounds without the slightest regard to its historical accuracy. There is a well-known case in the fine Veronese in the National Gallery, "Alexander the Great receiving the Family of Darius." If we understand this single case in all its bearings we shall understand the question completely. In times when the science of archæology had not yet become diffused in the common consciousness a picture of that kind might be generally accepted as a truthful representation of the scene, and it was really better for those times than the truth itself, which would have shocked and perplexed people by its strangeness, and prevented them from enjoying that nobility in the conqueror which was the real motive of the work. The purpose of art is not to shock or perplex, but to elevate and delight. Now this picture *is* elevating and delightful, both by the dignity of its conception, the charm of its colour, and the manual skill that it displays; consequently it answers all the conditions of a fine painting. It is conceivable that in some future age, even more matter-of-fact than our own, an historical or archæological society might recommend the exclusion of this picture from the National Gallery on the ground that it diffused erroneous ideas amongst the people, and might propose in its place some careful production, the

result of archæological research. The right answer would be that a National Gallery existed for art and not for science, and that the picture was in its proper place. Yet we have it on the authority of Paul Veronese himself that he introduced figures and costumes into his pictures without regard to the truth of the representation, but purely for artistic reasons. When he was called before the Inquisition to answer for the liberties he took in the composition of his religious pictures, he was asked, with reference to one composition in particular, who were the personages that he really believed to have been present, and his reply was, "I believe that nobody was present except Christ and His Apostles, but whenever there is room to spare in a picture I adorn it with invented figures." He was especially questioned as to the presence of halberdiers dressed in a German costume, and he simply answered that he had put them there by a licence analogous to those of poets. Again, being asked whether it was decent to represent buffoons, dwarfs, and drunken Germans in a picture of the "Last Supper," he gave a most curious reply, which shows that in those days a painter could have the idea of serving *hors-d'œuvres* like a cook—that is, things outside the serious business of the picture for the independent amusement of the spectator. He said, "I did it on the supposition that they were outside the place where the Lord's Supper was held." These answers fully confirm what the pictures themselves prove to us—that Paul Veronese worked simply in the spirit of an artist, without any serious intention of representing scenes as they must have been in reality. And with reference to the picture of "Alexander and the Family of Darius," the end of the whole matter is reached when we say that the fault is not in the picture itself, but in its title only, for if it had been entitled "A victorious General receiving Royal Captives," no historical criticism could have impugned it.

I have elsewhere defended Raphael's principle in the treatment of religious subjects (which are also in some measure historical), on the ground that even if it were possible to represent the scenes of the Bible as they actually occurred (and for this we have no data), such fidelity would be merely external, and would not in any way answer to the ideal dignity with which saints and apostles have been invested by the action of religious enthusiasm in the course of centuries since their death. I have shown that whilst Raphael's ideal compositions are certainly unhistorical (for they contain no narrative or descriptive truth whatever, either of portraiture, costume, grouping, or landscape background), they are incomparably superior to instantaneous photographs of the real scenes (if we could have them), in representing what the actors in them have subsequently become for the religious consciousness of mankind. This, in its own peculiar and exalted

fashion, is also a kind of truth, though it is not historical, but psychological. And it has this immense advantage over historical accuracy, that by allowing free play to the imagination, it is compatible with the highest art, whilst historical accuracy ties the mind down to positive fact, the antithesis of all that the spirit of art longs for and does what it can to realise.

The future of historical painting can hardly be considered promising, as the modern critical sense, the discernment that distinguishes between the known and the unknown, has deprived us of the simple credulity necessary for an unquestioning acceptance of modern representations of a remote past, so that the artist does not believe in his own work, and we ourselves have no faith in the artist. The kind of art that is still called "historical painting" (though, in truth, there is little that is historical about it except a name that it does not deserve) will be abandoned by the most imaginative artists who do not want to be fettered, and by the most intelligent, who will perceive that there are other and more satisfactory ways of employing artistic skill in the revival of the past. Those artists who unite technical skill with a conscientious desire for accuracy, and who have not much imagination, will employ their abilities more usefully and more satisfactorily to themselves in that genuine historical painting which records contemporary events. There are pictures painted by artists whom we ourselves have known that have now become perfectly historical, and yet were not considered so when they were painted. Nobody ever called Landseer and the elder Leslie historical painters, yet they have left records of the later life of the Duke of Wellington and of the happiest years of Queen Victoria, which are pages of history even now. It is to these and not to our vain imaginations of an unascertainable past that posterity will turn for the satisfaction of its historical curiosity. For, as I take it, the historic sense, as distinguished from the merely romantic, is a sense that seeks its gratification in the truth only, consequently it does not desire to imagine anything that is not true or that goes ever so little beyond what is ascertainable and has definitely been ascertained. At the same time, I believe that the connection between the historic sense and the artistic is purely accidental — that is to say, an artist (using the title in the strictest and highest sense) might have historical instincts or he might be utterly destitute of them; and we certainly find them in great strength in many antiquarians, whose desire for artistic satisfactions is so feeble that ugly things, if genuine and old, are preferred by them to things of the utmost beauty that are new. The final truth appears, therefore, to be that we have come upon one of those accidental coincidences which occur frequently in human pursuits. A man may have the painter's instinct and some other instinct along with it, such as a turn for yachting

(as in Mr. Brett or Mr. Barlow Moore), or the painter's instinct with that of the naturalist (as in Mr. Wolff), or the pictorial and literary instincts may go together as they did in Rossetti. In the subject which immediately concerns us I should say, for example, that the artistic and the historical instincts happen to be united in Jean Paul Laurens, one of the very few historical painters whose imagination of the past comes as a help to our own imagination.

CHAPTER V

STYLE IN HISTORICAL PAINTING

THE greater the pretensions of the historical painter, the more necessary it is for him to avoid all condescension in his manner of expressing himself.

Condescension, in the execution of works of art, consists in trying to please, conciliate, and amuse. The counterpart in human intercourse lies in the social quality that we call amiability. There is no amiability in the commands given by superiors to inferiors, or in the tone assumed by great personages at those times when they feel it necessary not to unbend. There is no place, either, for humour in dignified or authoritative utterance.

The universal feeling that the dignified and amusing qualities are incompatible has led painters to adopt a cold and dry style in pure historical painting. Their higher purpose was supposed to be the elevation of the mind, and it was felt that there would be some incongruity in trying at the same time to delight the eye by the luxuries of colour and texture, or by the magic of effect. The purpose of the highest historical painting would be to present great actions in such a manner as to impress the action itself on the spectator without diverting his attention to anything else. Considered as a representation of nature, such painting would be inadequate by the suppression of minor truths and beauties. It might even go further than mere inadequacy, it might be positively false from the visual point of view—that is, men and objects might be represented as the human eye could never see them in nature, and yet such historical painting might be successful in its own way by its clear and striking representation of the action, and by the exercise of imaginative power in impressing the action on our minds. As nothing in art-criticism is more liable to be disputed than the visual falsity of the nobler forms of art, I shall take leave to dwell a little on the subject. What is meant by visual truth is simply the subordination of all facts and all conceptions to the receptive capacity of the

eye. The picture that is visually true represents only just so much of every object as the eye would be able to see of it in nature, under the chosen effect of light, and that not by scrutinising bit by bit, in which case the eye would be continually altering its focus, but by taking in the entire scene or group of actors at one glance, with just so much of detail and so much definition as the eye could perceive in that way, and no more.[1] The result would be a sketch, finished only at its centre of interest, and containing many confused hints or suggestions of things seen imperfectly and mysteriously, or in some vague way perceived rather than seen. Perfect visual truth would be a rich medley of colours, in which drawing would consist much more in the due proportion of masses, and in the right placing of occasional accents, than in any careful following out of line. Such painting would, in fact, be impressionist, and would resemble much more nearly the latest pictures of Turner or the swiftest oil-sketches of Constable, than the clear and careful linear definition of a Raphael, or his French disciple and imitator, Ingres. Now, every intelligent reader will feel by a kind of instinct, without reasoning, that the oil-sketching of Turner and Constable, or the still more advanced and militant impressionism of Claude Monet, would be wholly unsuited to historical painting of a high order. There is a reason for all our instincts, though in some cases it may be difficult to discover. In the present case the reason seems to be that in historical painting the action is of most importance, that it is much more important either than the truth or the pleasure of vision; and since clearness and definition of design do unquestionably help the narrative of an action, the artist may permissibly sacrifice visual truth to historical precision. The drawing of Raphael and Ingres is not visually true, but it has the advantage of extreme clearness, owing to its perfect linear definition. If they had to defend themselves it is likely that they would take shelter under the authority of the Greeks, in whose arts of design, so far as we know them, and so far as we have reasons for believing anything about them, there was never the least attempt to render the mystery of nature, or to convey any

[1] "We have to learn not to paint all we see. It is not generally known that the cause of this difficulty is not so much mental as physical. We really do see more when we look for some time at each separate detail than when we look at the scene as a whole, and this is not so much a result of increased attention as of adjustment of the retina to the particular degree of light given out by each separate part of the scene." This extract is from Mr. John Collier's *Manual of Oil Painting*. The only observation I should feel disposed to add to it is, that when we look from one detail to another in nature we make, by each movement of the muscles of the eye, a new centre for the natural picture before us, so that if we copy each time what we see, the result must be a painted study with many optical centres instead of one. The readjustment of vision to different degrees of light must produce inconsistencies in light and dark as well as in detail. There are also readjustments caused by the different distances of objects from the eye.

kind of truth by hint or suggestion that the artist could not fully explain by the primitive technical methods at his command. The whole matter, therefore, reduces itself simply to this, that it is better for historical painting not to be too modern, that it ought not to be too advanced, and this because rather primitive methods tell a story most clearly. In the representation of great actions it is the actions themselves which concern us, and not delicacies and mysteries of vision. Raphael would therefore be a much better master for the historical painter than any of the suggestive painters of what is fugitive and evanescent in nature, and Ingres, whose ambition was to paint historical subjects adequately, was led to Raphael by a right instinct.

The next question about the style of historical painters, when once clearness has been admitted in preference to visual truth, is whether they ought to aim at giving pleasure by the dexterous imitation of objects. To take a conspicuous, because very popular example, we may ask whether the manual skill and imitative dexterity of Sir Edwin Landseer would be valuable or hurtful to the style of a great historical painter. The answer, as I believe, would be that such skill and dexterity would be so hurtful to the work of an historical painter that he could never become great in his own department of art without voluntarily and resolutely renouncing them. The reason is that the serious state of mind which applies itself to the narrative of great actions is incompatible with the dwelling upon truths comparatively so trifling as the texture of a donkey's coat, or the sparkle of light upon his eye. It was a right instinct that led historical painters to adopt that austerity of style which renounces amusing details. It is not their business to tickle the thoughtless spectator by tricks with a painter's tools. A simple style of painting that tells its story plainly is all that we ask of them, except, of course, that the work should be perfectly harmonious, that no part of it should be finished on any other principle than the austere principle adopted from the first. We know all this familiarly in its application to literature. We know that any serious work of literary art must be kept to its own high aim, that the grave historian cannot condescend to the tone or the details of the journalist, that it is impossible for him to tell the whole truth, and that his business is to select those truths which are at the same time significant and in harmony with his narrative, so that they can be easily embodied with it. When, however, these same principles are adopted by historical painters, their work is likely, from the absence of dexterity and prettiness, to be unpopular. And, in fact, it is this austerity, far more than the unsatisfactoriness of unauthentic representations of past events, which has killed historical painting. The only chance of its revival—I mean the revival of serious historical art, or what

used to be called so—lies in the more general adoption of mural painting as a decoration for public buildings. There are three reasons why mural painting favours historical art. The first and most obvious is that references to the past history of a nation at once suggest themselves as the most appropriate decoration for its public edifices. It is only in a time of such general apathy about the fine arts as that against which Haydon contended that people can look with complacency on vast spaces of blank wall; and a nation must either have no history, or be indifferent to that which it has, if it prefers some unmeaning pattern to a commemoration of what is glorious in its own past. The second reason why mural painting favours austerity in historical art is because deadness of surface is indispensable if the work is to be seen, and this deadness is an effectual discouragement to the love of texture and sparkle which indulges itself in varnished oil-painting. Finally, it is evident that mural art must always be simple and plainly legible, a necessity which puts an effectual stop to the imitation of what is mysterious in nature, so that mural painting can never be visually true, but must content itself with the conventionalism of line—a restriction highly favourable to austerity. It is true that many attempts have been made to reduce mural painting to the rank of a picturesque and amusing form of art, and this has been made the easier in modern times by the complete abandonment of genuine fresco and the substitution of easier processes, especially oil-painting with a wax medium, now commonly adopted in France. This is done on stretched canvases in studios, with all the convenience and facility of easel pictures, the canvases being afterwards removed from their stretching-frames and fixed to the wall with white lead. All these modern conveniences have had a tendency to bring mural painting down to the level of genre, with picturesque costumes for the historical personages, and even effects of light in landscape distances, as we see in the clever mural paintings by François Flameng in the grand staircase at the new Sorbonne. Or, again, the desire of the modern world to see itself represented in art may lead to the representation of labour in another than the political sense; the walls of a public building may show the modern workman at his toil, as for example in the large mural painting by M. Gilbert in the Parisian Tribunal of Commerce, where we have all the bustle of a great goods station exactly as in the reality, were it not for the happy absence of noise. The most interesting example of genuine historical painting which is at the same time picturesque is "La Voûte d'Acier," by Jean Paul Laurens, for the Parisian Hotel de Ville. Having described that picture at some length in another volume,[1] with the advan-

[1] *The Present State of the Fine Arts in France*, 1891.

tage of illustration, I will only say in this place that it represents a conciliatory State visit paid by Louis XVI. to the municipality of Paris. It therefore offered a very good opportunity for picturesque costumes, picturesque architecture, and the concentrated interest of a telling dramatic situation, whilst at the same time the subject was full of that gravity and dignity which are favourable to the best historical painting. Notwithstanding the picturesque element, which might have been a dangerous snare for an inferior artist, M. Laurens kept well above the temptation to frivolous painting, even the brilliant Court costumes having a most pathetic significance so near to the tragical catastrophe.

It has always been understood that style in drawing and painting could not exist without a certain largeness and comprehensiveness of manner. If the reader will analyse for himself any work that possesses what is called style, he will perceive that the manual or executive quality comes from a certain pride or dignity in the action of the mind by which it passes over details that are not significant, and idealises those truths of nature which it accepts as noble and important. The same mental operation may be studied at ease in literature, and though it is not quite so easy to observe it in conversation, it is the presence or absence of this habit of mind which makes all the difference between good talking and common chatter. Historical style does not despise detail, as detail, but only rejects it when irrelevant. Even the severest style—for example, that of Tacitus in literature—admits occasionally a detail that may have an effect upon the mind. "Civilis, barbaro voto, post cæpta adversus Romanos arma, propexum rutilatumque crinem, patrata demum cæde legionum, deposuit." "Civilis, by a barbarous vow (a vow usual amongst barbarians), after having taken arms against the Romans, laid down (had cut off) his long fair hair when the slaughter of his legions was accomplished." The passage would have been equally intelligible without the adjectives, but it gains infinitely in pathos by their introduction. The shorn locks were long and fair (*rutilatum* may mean reddish or shining). Does not our knowledge of this make the sacrifice seem to us more painful? It would be an error to suppose that because the historical style of Tacitus was remarkable for brevity and simplicity he was indifferent to literary art. His enthusiastic praise of the closely allied (though by no means identical) art of oratory is enough to prove that he had the feelings and susceptibilities of an artist. A style like his must be the product of a disciplined or disciplining will. All strong and consistent styles are the result of self-discipline; they do not come from the desultory movements of the undirected mind. The notion once prevalent in the classical schools of painting that style was insepar-

able from historical art had a real foundation in the needs of our higher nature, the only mistake in it was the uniformity of the style demanded when all living styles are personal and ought never to be imitated. One quality, however, is common to them all, and that is self-discipline, in view of an ideal perfection. In historical art the aim must always be *to present great actions greatly*—that is, to avoid pettiness of all kinds, and even to refuse to the spectator the lower gratifications of the eye. This would exclude rich textures, luscious colour, and shiny surfaces. It would bring us inevitably to the conclusion that the most suitable form for the highest historical painting is mural painting, with a dead surface, clear outlines, and much reticence and reserve in colour.

CHAPTER VI

HISTORICAL GENRE

THIS flourishing department of art is the result of clever catering for the modern public. What the modern public finds to be most interesting in the past is the kind of detail which connects it with our own life, and yet, at the same time, by amusing differences of fashion in the detail itself, marks the interval that separates us from preceding ages. The public is pleased to see that its ancestors were in many respects like itself, and equally pleased to see that every single thing which they had about them was unlike the things in use at the present day. If the reader will take the trouble to examine a few pictures belonging to this category, he will soon perceive that the labour of the artist has not been spent so much in painting *man* as the things which surround him or belong to him. This, however, is but half the matter. An object may be represented in several different ways. Its presence may be indicated whilst it is kept subordinate, or the thing itself may be represented for its own beauty, or lastly, if it is not beautiful in itself, it may be made at least artistically interesting by a feat of skill in execution, and by a cunningly judicious arrangement of light and shade. The way of treating objects that I have mentioned first, that of simple subordination, is not the principle of historical genre, it is the principle of a higher and more intellectual kind of art, and so does not at present concern us otherwise than as a contrast. The representation of things for their own beauty is more a classical than a modern principle, but the influence of classical studies has led a certain number of modern painters to enjoy the introduction of beautiful objects in their pictures, just as an ancient Greek, when drawing a man, might place a purely outlined amphora by his side. I notice that in many pictures of the contemporary French school there is a certain unobtrusive care and taste in the choice of accessory objects which one would not look for in any earlier French art except that which avowedly imitated classical models. I should say,

however, that in modern art, taken as a whole, the tendency is far more to the artistic interest of objects under chosen effects of light and arrangements of colour, than to the love of beauty in an object without reference to effect. This has come down to all of us from the Dutch school which demonstrated that a bucket and a besom with all the aids of lighting, of colour, and of marvellous execution, could be made more precious that the gilded furniture of the rich.

Few pictures of historical genre have attracted more attention in their day than "The Last Sleep of Argyle," by Mr. Ward, the academician. The criticism of the time said that Mr. Ward painted history as Macaulay wrote it, that is, with the fullest human interest. My recollection of the picture itself is still clear, and I am aided in what I have to say by an engraving. The Earl is lying on the bed in his cell, sleeping, as Macaulay says, "the placid sleep of infancy." A Privy Councillor has opened the door, and is struck with awe and astonishment at the tranquillity, "within an hour of eternity," of a conscience easier than his own. The light is made to fall upon head and pillow, on the carefully arranged coverlet of the bed, on the Earl's costume, every fold of which is given, down to the creases in the boots. Near the bed is a thick Bible and a large, almost spherical watch, with the light from the window on its domed glass. The cell is picturesquely vaulted, and (to get a distance) opens into another where a simple repast has been served. The Privy Councillor is robed rather than cloaked, and much care has been bestowed on his lawn cuffs and on the lights upon his shoe.

The same interest in the details of costume was shown in Mr. Ward's popular pictures of "The South Sea Bubble," and "James II. in his palace of Whitehall receiving the news of the landing of the Prince of Orange, in 1688." These two pictures are in the National Gallery, and if they seem wearisome to us now from the very excess of attention paid to the details of costume, and from the multiplicity of their materials, we ought to remember that at the dates of their production (1847 and 1850) this detailed revival of the past was almost a novelty in England, and people had not yet discovered how easily they may have too much of it. A cultivated artist of the present day would rather shrink from a subject like Mr. Ward's James II., or if he undertook it, he would display no more costume than was inevitable, whereas in 1850 Mr. Ward crowded as much costume and furniture as he could get into his canvas, even placing a cumbrously dressed courtier behind a screen. Every artistic movement is at first excessive, so that the desire for truth in revivals of the past led to a habit of accumulating material without stint, a habit not favourable to the serenity of the higher forms of art.

The exact opposite of historical genre is the austere art which looks only to the intellectual and moral significance of the work, without trying to interest the historical student by an accurate revival of the past, or to amuse the eyes of the modern public with pretty colours and textures, such as those afforded by the satin and velvet costumes of the eighteenth century. Unfortunately an extreme austerity in artistic work may injure it by denying all ocular pleasure to the spectator. A typical instance of this is the well-known picture of "The Death of Socrates," by David. Almost all English people dislike David, but he is extremely precious as an example for art-criticism, because he logically carried out certain principles to their utmost consequences and, in his own way, with great skill. When splendid costumes were a necessary part of his work he painted them, and painted them well, as in his magnificent picture of "Napoleon's Coronation." But David did not in the least care for making pretty and attractive pictures. His notion of art was the consistent expression of an idea rather than the mixing of ingredients to please the eye, as a cook mixes them to gratify the palate. His idea of the death of Socrates was rather moral than pictorial, the conception of a moral dignity serene in the most cheerless surroundings. The uncompromising plainness of the prison walls, every stone in them drawn with calm precision, though it has no beauty or interest of any kind, the stern simplicity of the two or three indispensable articles of furniture, the draperies of the figures without texture and, save one narrow border, without an ornament, make most unfavourable materials for an attractive picture of still-life. But Socrates is there, and for him "stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage." He accepts the cup of death, death that he had never either sought or dreaded, and of all that little company it is he who is the least saddened and the least agitated.

David tried to compensate for the extreme austerity of his subject by composition and a delicate care in execution. The composition is beautiful, the execution careful, but the first is more sculpturesque than pictorial, and the second is not painter-like in the complete sense. This brings us to one of the reasons for the popularity of historical genre. It is favourable to clever painting, because its first object is to amuse and gratify the eye, as artists endeavour to do in pictures of still life. In fact, historical genre usually includes so much still life that a great part of the canvas is occupied with it. Add to this the interest of clothed figures painted more for texture and colour than for their minds or morals, and you have a predominance of ocular over intellectual and moral purposes which, no doubt, is favourable to skill in the craft of painting. One of the first pictures I ever described

in print was an excellent example of all the various interests and qualities that are united in historical genre. It was a picture by Comte in the Salon of 1863 entitled "Récréation de Louis XI." The following explanation from Barante's *History of the Dukes of Burgundy* was inserted in the catalogue. "In the last year of his life, King Louis the Eleventh, weakened by disease, conceived this idea as a substitute for hunting which had been his favourite diversion. He had rats caught in the castle, and caused them to be worried by little dogs that were trained to this kind of game." The picture represented the King seated and enjoying this wretched sport, and now please observe how completely the subject answered the purposes of the historical genre-painter. Rat-catching is in itself a good subject of *Genre*. There is the animal-painting to be done in the representation of the miserable rats, and the eager, quick, excited little dogs; there is the knowing look of the experienced rat-catcher, and the interest of the different spectators. In Comte's picture the historical element was ingeniously added by showing us a great and powerful sovereign, enjoying the petty sport of a villager or a school-boy. Lastly, as technical imitative cleverness blends far better with the interests of historical genre than with the severe style of nobler historical painting, the artist had taken the opportunity for an original display of technical craft and skill. I will quote my own description written at the time when the picture was most fresh in my memory. "The picture is remarkable for its singular illumination. A sunbeam from an unseen window strikes the floor, and part of a panelled division that runs across the room, and the reflections from this in every direction light the whole picture. A man is bending low as he holds the dogs, and the reflection lights his red hose, thence again reverberating till it illumines the face of a man who is leaning over the wooden partition. The man with the dogs has a comrade in the same duty, whose shadow is visibly cast upwards on the wall from the spot of sunshine. The whole room is lighted from that one bright spot. Throughout, the painting is technically excellent, all textures and surfaces studied to the utmost." It only remains to be said that if technical skill is a common aim of the painter of simple genre, expression is also one of his strong points, and this too has been adopted in this kind of amusing historical painting. I quote again from my notes on Comte's picture. "As a study of expression the picture ranks high. The King is eager for his amusement, in a mean, rather timid, but very interested manner; the courtiers are more or less excited or disdainful, a monk very happy to see the sport, one officer of the Scotch guard rather interested, another evidently scorning the whole thing."

There is still another development of historical genre. The picture

just described represents a habit in the life of an historical personage, exhibits him to us in his privacy, as other pictures have represented him walking with Tristran l'Hermite in the neighbourhood of his castle at Plessis-les-Tours. The painter might, however, have gone a step further in exactness by fixing upon an incident instead of a habit. The desire for incident has led to pictures of historical anecdote which have been abundant during the middle decades of the nineteenth century, but are becoming less frequent towards its close amongst the productions of ambitious or eminent men. Anecdote has the advantage of attracting spectators for an instant in an exhibition, but along with that it carried the fatal disadvantage of a lack of permanence in its adventitious interest, as we very soon become familiar with the little story that there is to tell, and the picture's unending presentation of it quickly produces indifference when it does not become actively annoying. Besides this drawback, there is the further one that when the anecdote is at all popular, it is likely to be a stock-subject such as King Alfred letting the cakes burn, or Walter Raleigh throwing down his cloak for Queen Elizabeth to cross a muddy place, or Lady Jane Grey reading Plato whilst her friends are out in the hunting-field. In sacred history the repetition of what we should call anecdotes in secular life has not the same inconvenience, because it is the peculiar characteristic of religion to confer upon everything belonging to it a degree of permanence and currency practically without limit. Another peculiarity of religion as a subject for pictorial illustration is that the religious spirit, being always reverential, of itself discourages the critical spirit which is without reverence. Faith disposes the mind to accept the most various interpretations of holy anecdotes, without perceiving that the very variety of the interpretations makes them contradictory and therefore incredible. The modern painter of anecdotes in secular history does wisely to avoid those which have been frequently illustrated, and to confine his art to personages whose portraits are accessible. One of the most judiciously chosen subjects for this kind of art was taken by Mr. James Hayllar for his picture of Queen Elizabeth suffering from toothache. She wished to have the tooth drawn, but as her courage was not equal to the occasion a courtier sacrificed a sound one to demonstrate that the pain could be endured. The story had never before been painted, and was interesting enough for a picture of this class, being helped, pictorially, by the Elizabethan furniture and costumes.

The real object of historical genre was a popular and pecuniary success. Painters knew that their predecessors had starved upon dignified historical painting, and thought it prudent to avoid the decent poverty of Hilton and the disasters of Haydon's unquiet life. Historical genre offered, as it

seemed, an acceptable compromise between pure history and genre by including both in the same works. Its subjects were more elevated than those which the Dutch masters had adopted for pure genre. "The Last Sleep of Argyle" is an incomparably nobler subject, both pictorially and for its moral grandeur, than the besotted sleep of a Dutch boor that Teniers would have thought good enough for his art. Mr. Ward's picture of James II. at Whitehall does not only represent costume and furniture but has the tragic interest of fate, as the time chosen is the last hour of a dynasty. "The Récréation de Louis XI." is a homily on the petty interests of declining life. Even "Queen Elizabeth's Toothache" does at least carry with it the moral that the greatest and most famous personages are subject to the sufferings and weaknesses of humanity. In ordinary genre not only is the historical interest absolutely wanting, but the moral interest is usually much slighter, when it exists at all.

With all these advantages it is very doubtful whether historical genre will be followed, in the future, by painters of great artistic or intellectual force. It is a department of art exactly suited for clever and intelligent men, but not for great men. It requires an attention to small matters that a great intellect would be likely to consider trifling, whilst the principal exercise that it offers for the imagination is in realising, with the help of costume and furniture, the external appearance of life in other times. The business of it bears a close resemblance to that of a theatrical manager in getting up historical plays. Considering the human interest that belongs to historical genre, it may seem a strange thing to say that a great artistic genius might find a more ample expression in landscape, yet I have no doubt that this is so in reality. Landscape-painting expresses the moods of the human mind in the presence of the natural universe, and also (for this equally belongs to landscape-painting) in human labours on the earth, from the humblest cottage with its tiny garden-plot to the most magnificent cities with their bridges and quays, their palaces and towers. Landscape-painting, no doubt, has often been literal and prosaic, but it may have the harmonies and melodies of music, or the depth of sentiment that belongs to the profoundest poetry. The comparative inferiority of historical genre may be realised if we estimate the loss to art by the employment of Claude and Turner, or even a Cox or a Corot on costumes and incidents in English or French ante-chambers.

CHAPTER VII

BIOGRAPHY IN PAINTING

THE Graphic Arts are unsuited for the representation of a long series of changes such as those which take place continually in the course of life, and which the literary biographer narrates in successive pages. The painter can only illustrate some of the more important phases or events in human life, and he usually finds himself confronted by a difficulty arising from the lack of materials. It is only in the case of exalted personages who are followed by draughtsmen for the illustrated press that anything approaching to a graphic biography can be said to form itself in course of time; and even in their case the sketches are often inaccurate both as to the portraiture of persons and the representation of their surroundings.

I have said that the lack of materials is the common difficulty of biographical painters who have to eke out their work by the help of more or less plausible invention. There is, however, another difficulty which often turns out to be equally formidable even in the very cases when the materials are most abundant. It may happen that they are unsuitable for the purposes of art, so that the painter may be compelled by a purely artistic necessity to discard the truth which he knows and substitute something that is not the truth but is likely to be more pleasing in a picture. There is a typical instance of this in the important and very successful picture by Gros, representing the historical visit of General Bonaparte to the plague-stricken patients at Jaffa. The painter had not been present when the incident took place, nor had he ever visited the locality, but a good deal of the truth was accessible to him through the testimony of eye-witnesses. Amongst other matters of importance the painter knew from Denon's information that the incident happened in a room lighted by several windows; but when Gros had made a first project for his picture, with a due respect for the facts, the idea occurred to him that the scene might be made more impressive by calling in the assistance of picturesque architecture,

so he substituted for the bare interior the courtyard of a fine mosque, and put the sufferers under the shade of what in Christian architecture we should call a cloister. This afforded an opportunity for representing not only the arches and other ornaments of the building itself, but also some open sky with a tower and a citadel. The pictorial gain is immense, but all the veracity of the scene is as much destroyed as if a royal visit to St. Thomas's hospital were transferred by a painter to the cloisters of Westminster Abbey. The knowledge of this untruth makes one uncertain about everything else. We do not feel sure that Bonaparte wore that very showy full dress on such an occasion. He may have done so, but, as a rule, during his campaigns he was exceedingly simple in his attire. Again, one may suspect that the plague-stricken patients were not quite so naked as the painter has represented them. The groups, as he drew them, are like groups from Dante's "Inferno." And of one thing we may be absolutely certain, there cannot have been, in the real scene, such a completely pictorial piece of composition as Gros put together in his *atelier*. Any one at all accustomed to art-criticism sees at the first glance that these figures are most artificially arranged. In short, the artist has not endeavoured to represent the incident as it took place, but as a painter might have wished it to take place. At the time when I am writing these pages there are many painters in the French school who would unhesitatingly sacrifice pictorial grandeur to historical accuracy, if only the truth were ascertainable. The movement in the direction of veracity began, in fact, many years ago. The reader may remember David's famous and characteristic picture of Napoleon crossing the Alps. David's object was to make Napoleon look as masterful and imposing as possible, and with this view, although the truth was perfectly accessible to him, he represented the General on a fiery and prancing charger, in full uniform, with embroidery and bullion fringes and a mantle flying in the wind. Delaroche afterwards gave as much of the truth as he had been able to ascertain, which was that Bonaparte crossed the Alps in a plain undress, and riding a mule led by a guide. As to the mental condition of the hero, Delaroche represented it as profoundly thoughtful—that of a man absorbed in his own schemes. There is, no doubt, a certain truth in David's picture in the sense that it represents the proud and domineering spirit of Napoleon, but there is no biographical truth. The extreme difficulty of accurate narrative in graphic art may even be illustrated by the picture so conscientiously imagined by Delaroche, for he had no opportunity of painting either the guide, the mule, or even the landscape as Bonaparte saw it, so that his work, after all, is not pictorially true.

The art of enhancing the dignity of a hero in a biographical picture has sometimes gone so far as to introduce even the supernatural. Tiepolo did this in his picture of Ferdinand III. of Spain in a battle near Cadix, where he represented that monarch as his own standard-bearer, with the saintly nimbus floating over his head and cherubs in the sky. In cases of this kind it may be argued that there is truth of another order; the picture may not represent a fact, but it certainly represents a belief; it is true to some popular or religious ideal which the bare fact would offend against and perhaps destroy.

Biographical pictures often contain only one or two authentic portraits surrounded by figures taken from models, or the personage himself may be absent, though his presence is still felt. The most striking picture that I remember in which this device has been resorted to had for its subject a supper in a monk's refectory in commemoration of the Last Supper, Christ's place being left vacant. This, by itself, would have been impressive enough, but the credibility of the work was diminished, while its poetry may have been enhanced, by a supernatural light above the vacant seat.

In a picture of less serious import, Mr. G. H. Boughton once amused himself by depicting the alarmed faces of Peter the Headstrong's councillors when, during his absence and by his orders, his cane was laid on the cloth before his place at the council-table. The most curious part of the effect produced by this picture is a certain feeling of awe in ourselves when we think of the invisible master.

Many readers will remember a drawing by Mr. Fildes, published in the *Graphic* very soon after the death of Charles Dickens. It was called "The Empty Chair," and represented simply the interior of the novelist's writing-room, exactly as he left it. Few more impressive or affecting drawings have ever been made, and when we analyse our sensations, we find that they are due in great part to our faith in the fidelity of the representation. We know that Mr. Fildes really drew the things as they were, and this is why we care about them. Artists have very frequently represented empty chairs, and given titles implying some reference to death, but these works affect us slightly in comparison. This is because the subject of death is only a general subject for us until it gains a special interest by its connection with some one whom we have known or can imagine that we have known.

I was led to this consideration about death by thinking how artists impressed us by painting absence; however, it is not death but life and the representation of it that occupy us at present. It unfortunately happens that the lives which would most interest us pass beyond the observation of artists before they have become sufficiently celebrated to attract them. If

at later periods an attempt is made to resuscitate the youth or early manhood of men who have become famous later, the impediments to fidelity are too numerous. It would be necessary, in all works that are more than simply portraits, to give truthful representations not only of the principal personage, but of his obscure friends and companions, sometimes even of his servants, and this would involve impracticable and fruitless researches.

Biographical pictures sometimes consist in little more than a representation of a man in an attitude characteristic of his life and work. A sovereign is enthroned, or a law-giver is formally promulgating a law. Several modern painters have attempted in this way a characteristic representation of historical personages. In the French school two or three of the most notable pictures of this class have been Benjamin Constant's Justinian on his throne, with his councillors on lower seats; his Theodora, also enthroned; and especially that powerful representation of the Lower Empire, in which Jean Paul Laurens showed the young and stolid-faced Honorius solemnly seated with the sword of empire in his right hand, whilst his left rests on an orb that carried a statuette of Victory. These pictures have at least the advantage of exhibiting a king as a king, whereas when the paraphernalia of royalty are laid aside, and the august sovereign is dressed like other people, the art of painting is incompetent to convey the notion of his pre-eminence and power. In modern lives the visible truth is very rarely adequate as an expression of human greatness. In our day two widow ladies may sometimes be seen together, driving out perhaps, or walking quietly in a royal garden. There is nothing warlike in their aspect, yet one of them had considerable influence in bringing about the Crimean War, and the other in causing the great conflict between France and Germany. The terrible power that sends armies into the field may sometimes be wielded by a lady, and that in the gentlest manner, as if she touched the electric apparatus that launches a man-of-war. How can we express such a power by any fidelity to what is visible? Rubens would have expressed it by making a warlike empress, half a goddess, commanding grim personifications of fire and slaughter. To us the mixture of biography with allegory in the graphic arts appears incongruous and absurd. It is now entirely banished from historical painting, and has been taken up by the caricaturists because, in simply availing themselves of it, they know that they will make their subject ridiculous.

I remember one unfortunate modern attempt to represent pictorially the invisible truth about the story of a life. Napoleon said of his assumption of empire, "I found the crown of France on the ground, and I picked it up." A French artist, M. Réalier-Dumas, materialised this metaphorical

expression by showing us the crown of France on the floor of a room in the Tuileries that a revolutionary mob was leaving, whilst Napoleon stayed behind and looked at it with longing eyes. The picture is useful as an example of the inconveniences which attend the realisation of a metaphor. We at once understood the sense of Napoleon's words which refer to the assumption of the supreme power. The painter makes him look like a thief who wants to carry off a valuable piece of jewellery.

Simple portraits are scarcely to be considered biographical except as representing an instant of time in the life. They do not represent a day, as there are many actions in a day, nor even an hour, for there are many attitudes in the most unoccupied of hours. And even when the attitude remains the same for a few minutes the thoughts and the expression change. The biographical interest of portraits is immensely enhanced when we have a succession of them, taken at different ages, and especially when they represent the subject employed in different occupations. The pride or vanity of men, and their desire to pose for posterity, unfortunately induce them to assume attitudes that rarely help us to understand the realities of their life. A good biographical portrait painter would catch them at unguarded moments when their attitudes are most personal and most characteristic, and he would surround them, not with formal and dignified furniture and upholstery that may belong to anybody, but with objects that are their own and express their personal tastes and preferences. This has already been done with happy results in two important series of portraits of well-known contemporaries issued by the *Graphic* and the *Monde Illustré*. The English series was rapidly sketched, the French engraved with extreme elaboration, and so interesting did the furniture become from its connection with the celebrated owner, that the most minute care in the representation of it did not seem to be out of place.

The interest given by a celebrity to the things belonging to him is such that admirers of a favourite author will walk miles to see even the outside of his house, though it probably does not in the least express his own ideas about domestic architecture unless, like Sir Walter Scott, he has been able to build it for himself. The backgrounds of portraits are therefore by no means limited in their interest to interiors, and instead of slightly sketching some insignificant background of clouds and foliage, the painter might enhance the biographical value of his work by placing his subject close to his own home, or at least in some favourite haunt.

To be perfect, biographical pictures would be like illustrations to novels, if only the illustrations were true. People would be represented together as they lived, and where they lived. There are two great impediments to

this kind of art, the first coming from the people themselves, who always imagine that their present life is insignificant, though afterwards they will be sorry that they did not preserve some record of it; and the second coming from artists who for pictures of groups with interesting surroundings prefer interiors that they can arrange at their own pleasure, and models who will pose conveniently in any attitude. The difficulty offered by the inartistic nature of English houses and costumes in the middle of the present century has now so far disappeared that artists can find what is available by the exercise of some care and taste in selection. Fashions are not always beautiful in our time, but they are so very frequently. Houses are still often dull and mechanical in design, but the number of beautiful and interesting houses has increased with the modern tolerance of invention in domestic architecture.

Our conclusion must be that the Graphic Arts are valuable as an assistance to biography, but hardly for biography itself, as they are not continuous enough. The nearest approach to continuity in modern times amongst ordinary people is reached by those who are in the habit of being very frequently photographed. Unfortunately, the photographic record is usually limited to the person, owing to the bad but almost unavoidable practice of having portraits taken in the photographer's own room with his backgrounds and furniture that serve indiscriminately for sitters of all classes and all characters.

MAN IN ART

PART V

PORTRAIT

CHAPTER I

THE RANK OF PORTRAITURE IN THE ARTS

IT is sometimes permissible, because it is sometimes useful, to refer to one's own private experience, so I may perhaps say in this place that the interest of portrait, both in sculpture and painting and in all kinds of original drawing by engraving, has quietly and steadily been increasing for me during the last twenty years. The fact may be of some slight interest for my readers, because it shows at least that the study of portrait is not without reward, and that this branch of art, at first apparently one of the most simple, as it seems to be the mere copyism of a living object, contains more within its depths than is obvious to the beginner in art-criticism. But not only has the positive interest of portrait greatly increased for me since I was a young man, its relative interest is also very much greater. Portraits hung amongst other pictures attract me much more than they did formerly, and in selecting illustrations for this volume I have been constantly tempted to take noble portraits in preference to everything else. At the same time, my interest in the popular kind of art that I have called "historical genre," which was lively enough in youth, has gone on steadily declining, and now I find myself caring very little for arrangements or accumulations of picturesque material, whilst I am most pleased with those works that combine simplicity of purpose with dignity and veracity—qualities that are often found together in the best portraits, both by old and contemporary masters.

It was excusable enough in one whose youth was passed at a distance from great capitals to infer from what he saw around him that portraiture was an inferior branch of art. In those days photography was only just beginning its extensive services to society and the fine arts. One of its best services to these has been to undertake the enormously increasing business of representing ordinary people with sufficient truth to satisfy their relatives, without encouraging an inferior class of painters. Common

portrait-painting used to be a handicraft in which success was held to be achieved when the workman had caught a likeness. The more ambitious and cultivated portrait-painters almost invariably lived in capital cities, and the most serious amongst them looked back with reverence to Velasquez and Vandyke, or to our English Reynolds and Gainsborough. The lower class, who went about the country in search of employment, were contemptuously described by Scott in the person of Dick Tinto, in the first chapter of *The Bride of Lammermoor*, and this is one of the very rare cases in which Scott's noble nature was sufficiently unsympathetic to speak in a tone of raillery of a poor man's struggle for existence. "Amid his wants and struggles, Dick Tinto had recourse, like his brethren, to levying that tax upon the vanity of mankind which he could not extract from their taste and liberality—in a word, he painted portraits. It was in this more advanced state of proficiency, when Dick had soared above his original line of business, and highly disdained any allusion to it, that, after having been estranged for several years, we met again in the village of Gandercleugh, I holding my present situation, and Dick painting copies of the human face divine at a guinea per head. This was a small premium, yet, in the first burst of business, it more than sufficed for all Dick's moderate wants; so that he occupied an apartment at the Wallace Inn, cracked his jest with impunity even upon mine host himself, and lived in respect and observance with the chambermaid, hostler, and waiter." The end of poor Dick Tinto was to go to London to fight his way to fame, and, instead of it, find poverty and a premature grave.

This was before the age of photography, which has deprived the lowest class of portrait-painters of their bread, whilst it has left eminence in their profession if possible more eminent than ever. A portrait of some important personage by a well-known artist becomes at the present day more famous than at any previous period in the history of the fine arts; and although it may be difficult for any artist to go beyond the worldly success of Reynolds,[1] there are more large incomes made by portrait-painting in our time than by the most popular historical genre. Another striking proof of the vitality of portrait is that painters who have won their fame in other branches of art go to seek an augmentation of it in portraiture also, —a tendency most favourable to the freshness and interest of portraiture itself, as these artists bring to it new habits of sight, and so preserve it from a narrow professional routine. There has, then, been a movement in

[1] Taking into consideration the value of money and the *relative* importance of different reputations. In the time of Reynolds his worldly position was equal to that of any portrait-painter now living, though Carolus Durand earns what is nominally a much larger income than his.

two directions—one to the ruin of portraiture as a mechanical trade, the other towards its preservation and elevation as a fine art. Both, in opposite ways, have been equally favourable to portraiture.

The worldly failure or success of this or any other branch of art can have little interest for criticism except in one way, and that is not to be overlooked. Pecuniary encouragement is important, even from the critic's point of view, though he has no private interest in it, as it determines the existence or, in its absence, the extinction of a fine art. Supposing Dick Tinto to have been a living personage (and it is likely that the author of *Waverley* described him from recollection), it is evident that, with rather better pecuniary success he might have studied more, worked more at his ease, and enjoyed long years of progress, instead of going down prematurely to his grave. He would at least have escaped from the ridicule cast upon him by a more successful portrait-painter, in words, to whom we owe the little that is known to us about him. In this sense the pecuniary success of artists has an interest for criticism, but otherwise it is as nothing, and the nothingness of it, relatively to the history of art, is best proved by the varying prices, not only of portraits, but of works of art of all kinds.

The true rank of portraiture amongst the fine arts must be determined by other considerations. And, first, does it contain anything that is not obvious at first sight? What is obvious is the making of a resemblance to a living object. From this point of view, portrait is merely object-painting, like still-life, with the difference that the model is not inanimate, though, as he remains perfectly still, or as quiet as he can, he tries to make himself as easy a subject for the painter as if he were a bust of bronze or marble. We will pass to other considerations in due course, but for the present let us dwell a little on this quality of portrait as the simple representation of an object. A man who stands perfectly still to be painted from nature, and in the steady light of a studio, is in fact an object in the same sense as any other tangible thing—in the same sense as, for example, the table by his side, or the column and curtain behind him. Now, if the painter could represent this living object with the same fidelity as the lifeless things round him, would the result be sufficient and satisfactory? Mr. John Collier, who is a very able portrait-painter, appears to think that it would. He advocates the practice of imitation, touch by touch—the picture, if of life-size, to be placed close to the sitter, if smaller, at a little distance, regulated by the difference in size—and then the artist is to verify every touch by walking backwards to see if it comes right. This is the practice of Sir John Millais, and it seems at first sight as if it would exclude imagination—indeed, Mr. Collier tells us plainly that "portraiture makes

no demands on the imagination," and that "the problems it presents are very simple." Still, "from their very simplicity arises a special difficulty. How is it possible to make an interesting picture out of a commonplace person in the costume of the present day? It must be acknowledged that in some cases the problem is hopeless. There are some portraits which, at the best, can only be interesting to artists on account of their technical merits, but which to the general public must be simply ugly and dull."

In portraiture there are two elements—the sight of physical shapes which the artist copies as he makes a study from the life, and his interpretation of the mind and character of the subject. The second part is too important and complicated to be considered in the present chapter, although it is certain that the rank of portraiture amongst the fine arts must depend in a great measure on the validity of its pretension to interpret mind. Leaving that half of the subject for the present out of the question, we see that, from the physical point of view only, a portrait is equivalent to a study from the living model, but as there is very little nudity, the artist avoids the great difficulty of painting the naked body, or, if he is a sculptor, of carving it. At this moment I am thinking of a portrait by Tintoret, in which the face only is visible, the neck being entirely hidden, whilst the hands are cased in great ill-fitting gloves, coming above the wrists. There are many portraits of what we consider the picturesque ages, in which an excess of costume covers almost the entire human being, and that in such a manner as to conceal not only the skin but the forms, so that it is almost impossible to know whether they are muscular or meagre, as for example when they are hidden under robes of ceremony. Portrait-painting is therefore scarcely figure-painting in the complete sense, and we may perhaps understand the greater respect felt by artists for studies of the nude when we remember that a portrait-painter usually covers all but a very small portion of his canvas either with a background that is often meaningless, or with costume that can be at best only a successful study of still-life. And even the face and hands themselves are usually no more than object-studies, though the object is not inanimate.

These facilities and limitations of portrait-painting have exposed it more than any other branch of art to the evils of manufacture. Followed simply for gain, and not for art and reputation, portraiture easily sinks into the condition of a manual trade, as we ourselves have known it in the nineteenth century. Any clever workman who had the gift of catching a likeness could copy a face in a few sittings, and cover a background rapidly. The hands, in the regular portrait-manufacture, were treated as objects of little or no importance, and often painted with slight reference to nature.

I remember the case of a clever amateur who set himself to imitate the portrait-manufacturers of his time, and succeeded so well that his work passed easily for theirs, though no one would have attributed to it any artistic value. He could not have imitated historical painting, or genre, with the same facility. Even in recent years, and in spite of the rivalry of the photograph, I remember an Italian artist who carried forward the business of portrait-painting on the soundest commercial principles, settling down for a few months in some provincial town, and painting all the well-to-do lawyers and tradesmen. On his departure he left traces of his sojourn on many walls, in pictures animated enough, no doubt, and terribly like the originals, but in the most frightful colour—works of art that no one would ever have purchased for an æsthetic reason, yet for which the human desire to see itself in paint had been willing to disburse a five-pound, nay, even a ten-pound note, so that the Italian Dick Tinto lived in comparative affluence. The artistic results of an extensive commerce of this kind are in the highest degree deplorable. Domestic affection keeps them whilst it lasts, that is, for a generation, and for so long they are fixtures on the walls. To remove the father and mother seems unkind to them when living, and after their death undutiful, and if portraits are kept in private life in this way for a few years, those of public characters may live with the celebrity of their subjects. In both cases, equally, works hold their position by another claim and another interest than art. The historical and biographical value of inferior pictures that happen to be the only authentic portraits of famous persons is always and everywhere a most efficacious protection for them, so that here we have to do with a kind of art that can exist and perpetuate itself independently of quality, and which, by establishing itself on the extraneous ground of biographical interest, can set artistic criticism at defiance.

Whilst, however, the art of portrait-painting may be disconnected so easily from fine art, and still subsist by satisfying human affection for the living or interest in the dead, it may, on the other hand, be so closely connected with what is noblest and best in art as to live independently of all interest in the person who has been painted. Thus we have, both in public and private collections, immortal portraits of persons whose very names are utterly unknown to us, ghosts of the far past, whose semblance has come down to us like a vision seen with the utmost distinctness, yet incapable of answering our questions—"Who are you?" and, "In what manner did you pass through this mortal life?" Such portraits are the contrary of those fictitious images by which we represent the illustrious dead of whom no likeness has been preserved. Whether such images have been created by

ourselves in our own imagination, or fixed permanently for us by the art of painting, we are still certain that they cannot resemble the forms that have been lost for ever. Of the unknown we have sometimes the clearest details; of the known, nothing to control or rectify a conjecture or a dream. Of the two, it is perhaps the clear portrait of the unknown that most excites in us an unsatisfied and unsatisfiable curiosity, since we know less about a man whom we have only seen, than about one whose character and thoughts have been opened for us. As for the poor nameless ghosts of the past in our public galleries and private houses, they look down upon us as if they were still living, and we know nothing about them—nothing of their passage from the cradle to the grave, except that they were living in that way at the time when the painter painted them, and we remember some events of their age, and wonder what interest they took in these events, or whether they had any personal share in them. "That man," we think, "dressed in those fashions and cultivated that moustache in the time of the Spanish Armada;" or, "Those eyes have probably seen Rembrandt himself at Amsterdam, or Titian at Venice"—according to the origin of the picture and the school to which it belongs. And then we wonder what kind of a private live the unknown man had passed through, and though he seems as happy as most of us, there may be a touch of dissatisfaction in his expression, as there is on the face of Montaigne, that we try to account for by the idlest and most unfounded conjectures. Meanwhile, the ghost is not preserved in the gallery for any of these reasons, but simply because the picture is good in handling and colour, and an example of some excellent artist, or a valued illustration of some particular school.

And as time goes on and on, as the slow centuries pass, the reason for preserving portraits will be more and more the artistic reason, when family traditions lose themselves, and even long-lived reputations die. One of the increasing characteristics of modern life is apathy about ancestors, unless it is possible to enhance by their means the importance of the living, as by the revival of abeyant peerages. It is true that we commemorate more than ever the famous and illustrious dead, especially when they have occupied an exalted social position; certainly no age wholly freed from Egyptian superstitions, could have commemorated a prince more visibly than by the monument erected to Prince Albert, and if statues are not often gilded or placed beneath a towering canopy, the number of them in bronze or marble erected in our time seems to indicate a lively desire to perpetuate the memories of all who have a claim to public gratitude. But along with this increased attention to the dead, who when living were either exalted in rank or useful to the community, there goes an increasing indifference to

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN

VENETIAN SCHOOL

ETCHED BY G. W. RHEAD

(*National Gallery*)

I HAVE selected this as an example of simplicity and symmetry in portraiture, and because I like the original picture very much.

The symmetry is so complete that whatever there is on one side there is on the other side also. It is only interfered with by the lighting which comes from the spectator's left, and even that (by a licence common with portrait-painters in all ages) is much more marked in the face and hair than in the dress.

Symmetry of this perfect kind is not possible in the earliest art, which is that of profile, nor in fully developed art either, which does not try for unity in exact repetition but in variety. This portrait marks an intermediate stage. To imitate it in our time would be an intentional archaism.

By an understanding between the etcher and me he has purposely adopted a primitive style of treatment which corresponds, in another art, with the technical qualities of the painting.

the obscure and almost nameless dead whose lives were passed in the performance of simple duties, or who brightened those of others by unselfish affection. It is a characteristic of our time, and not a favourable or a hopeful characteristic, that young people look forward so keenly to their own establishment in life, with a view to pleasure and enjoyment, or, in rarer instances, with a view to personal ambition, that they have not time or thought for any pious interest in their forefathers. And the sight of this apathy has a deterrent effect on the formation of family history itself; for there is no great temptation to spend money on portraits that posterity will not value, or to waste time in writing memoirs that it will never read. There are young people of middling station who care so little about those who went before them that they really do not know the names of their ancestors two generations back—I mean that they are forgetful of such a little detail of not distant family history as their grandmother's maiden name—whilst they are so indifferent to the history of their ancestors that they have never taken the trouble to visit the places where they passed their lives. In the upper classes this apathy is marked by the prevalent ignorance of heraldry, an ignorance that confuses, for example, quarterings with impalements, so that due distinctions are not maintained between shields borne by different members of the same family. If to this decay of family piety we add the unquestionable increase in artistic culture that has marked the latter half of the nineteenth century, it becomes more and more probable that portraits of obscure persons destitute of value as works of art, will be replaced by paintings of no interest in the history of families, but capable of affording æsthetic pleasure. Some of us have seen this change in actual operation, when portraits of recently deceased relations (especially if they did not look quite like gentlemen and ladies) were removed to make way for fancy pictures from the exhibitions.

These considerations lead plainly and directly to the conclusion that the artistic merit of a portrait is more than ever necessary to its preservation, and especially to its continued keeping of its place in the house for which it was originally intended. It is only when the original is destined to an immortality of his own that his portrait is likely to inspire any permanent interest in spite of mediocrity as a painting, and as all, except a very few reputations, even amongst the celebrated, differ only from physical life by lasting a little longer, to resemble it most precisely afterwards in the completeness of their extinction, the conclusion is that unless the artist is great enough to confer immortality on his subject, the portrait is destined to complete and speedy oblivion. Hence the need, in ordering one's portrait, for a better knowledge of art than has been common in preceding

generations. If we live at all in portrait, we shall live as a reward for our own critical acumen in choosing an artist whose works themselves will live. Nor is the present celebrity of the painter any certain guide to this futurity of fame. No artists are more the playthings of temporary fashion than the portrait-painters, because no artists come so closely into contact with the world that makes or submits to fashion. It may sometimes happen that the artist who has most chance of conferring immortality is left outside of fashion, as Rembrandt when he etched "Six," "The Coppenols," "Lutma," "Uijtenbogaerd," and "Jan Sylvius." Of these names, how many would have reached us without the skill of an etcher who did not make a profession of etching, but scratched a plate occasionally as a relief from painting, and had a clumsy wooden press to take proofs in some corner of his house or of his painting-room?

If portraits are to depend on their own technical excellence for their preservation in future centuries, there is at least this consolation for their subjects, that no branch of art is more favourable to excellence of workmanship. The work is simple in itself, and done directly from nature, so that the artist is free to devote his mind entirely to the exercise of his manual skill, and it is quite true that no branch of art, unless it be the nearly allied one of still-life, has done more for the development of manual skill, and for the maintenance of it as an attainment. No one will accuse me of under-valuing landscape (I am sometimes accused of *over*-valuing it), but I do not hesitate to say that landscape-painting is usually far inferior to portrait as a craft. And one of the great reasons why portraiture ought to be encouraged and maintained, is because it keeps men up to a certain standard of cleverness in flesh-painting and draperies. All artists, even when their specialities are so far apart as historical painting and landscape, say that they find portrait strengthening as practice. For young painters just emerging from studentship, it is the best transition from the life-class to historical painting or genre. And if, as his accomplishment increases, an artist wishes to carry portrait beyond the simple representation of a single figure, there is nothing in the nature of the art to impose any limitations on his invention in the arrangement of groups. Of all the varieties of art, portrait is the most favourable to men who have some gifts, but not all gifts, and who do not exactly know what their gifts may be, or how far they will carry them. It is a branch of art for which the higher gifts of taste and imagination are not indispensable, and yet in which they never fail to tell. It seems to belong to commonplace fact and prose, yet it admits of fancy and grace, and even poetry. A satisfactory degree of success has often been attained in it

by men of very moderate intellectual power; sometimes, indeed, they have made fortunes more easily than men of genius, yet, at the same time, the greatest artistic and intellectual force has found its expression in portraiture. It absolutely requires very small powers of memory, as the sitter is there, yet the rarest power of memory may be of use in recalling and fixing some momentary expression which is the real revelation of a man's nature. Some portraitists have succeeded with a feeble gift of colour, and with a degree of technical charm so moderate that it would have been insufficient for a painter of still-life or of landscape; this was the case of Ary Scheffer, who succeeded in portrait by nothing but sound drawing and good taste. Others have brought to portrait the most glorious gifts of colour and technical quality, and they were as acceptable in this branch of art as they would have been in history or landscape. In a word, portrait is a kind of art that does not exact great talents, yet affords a fine field for their exercise if the artist happens to possess them. In this it is far more convenient for men of some talent, but not of genius, than either history or landscape, for history requires great powers of invention, and landscape a great memory, and the technical gift of the colourist.

The technical rank of portrait must always be a substantial rank, because it is founded in quite a peculiar degree on excellence in drawing. We know how little drawing is usually put by landscape-painters into their works. A few of them have had a refined sense of form, but that quality does not in any sure way lead them to success, it is colour and a sentimental charm, a sort of poetry, that make the fortune of the landscape-painter. Animal-painting requires much greater knowledge of form, but even here there is wide liberty, as although a sheep must be distinguishable from a goat, the public does not require much individuality in a flock of sheep. Pictures of genre are accepted if they tell their story well, and nobody asks if the faces are like the models, or the legs of the actors more or less robust than Nature made them. Even in historical painting a very moderate precision of form is all we care for, we like to recognise the few historical personages whose appearance is, in a general way, supposed to be known, but there is an end to our demand for individuality. In the portraiture of living people that demand is incomparably more exacting. It is not enough that a nose must be a possible nose, a feature answering the general purposes of a nose, it must be of the shape and relative size of the nose possessed by the subject of the picture, or else all his friends will complain of the artist's infidelity, and the subject himself will think that his nose has been treated without that delicacy of considera-

tion which is due to it. No one could have reproached Holbein with such want of consideration when he delineated with the greatest care the important and imposing feature that adorned the profile of Erasmus, a feature no doubt delightful to the painter himself as the distinction of a remarkable individuality. Our own contemporary, Mr. Ouless, did equal justice to the wonderful nose of Cardinal Newman, a nose that seemed to precede the rest of the face like an *avant-garde*, and behind which the eye beamed benignant in serene security. These features, and perhaps still more the thin lips of Erasmus, required much care and accuracy in drawing; but the most difficult faces of all are those in which the forms are least striking and the least definite, the faces that depend for their shape upon expression, and seem to have really no drawing in them, yet such form as there is, with all its uncertainty, all its lack of individuality, has to be drawn and made as recognisable as the well-marked features of a Gladstone. And whether the portrait is linear in treatment like a Holbein, or painted in broad masses of light and dark with intentionally untraceable outlines, truth of form is equally indispensable in both cases, though form is not exhibited in both with the same rigidity of definition. The most subtle drawing of all is that which suggests truths that it does not positively affirm.

It might be maintained that the practice of portraiture has taught artists of all schools an accuracy in drawing that they would never have acquired without it, and also that it has taught the public the rudiments of a simple kind of criticism, which is not really in contradiction to the higher criticism, but an early state of knowledge from which the higher criticism has been developed. Rudimentary criticism is simply the ascertainment of resemblance to nature, a comparison between nature and the work of art to ascertain whether the artist has been a faithful copyist or not, and, if not, in what special deviations from the model before him his infidelity has consisted. Now, this kind of criticism is invariably applied to portraits, and applied to them with a rigour unusual in judging other kinds of art. It is a sound and reasonable kind of criticism so far as it goes, and the advantage of it to the public is that it tends to educate the eye in the observation of form.

Another benefit which comes from portraiture is that it calls back the arts to a comparatively primitive stage. I am well aware that portraits may be painted in a very advanced manner, and that they are so by a few artists who attract considerable attention in the present day. What I mean by an advanced manner is a manner that avoids definition, and tries to convey the idea that somehow disengages itself from reality, rather than to

imitate the reality itself. A very distinguished French painter told me that the notion now prevalent amongst the younger men is that material things ought not to be painted, but a sort of vision that floats as it were between the things and the eye of the artist. I hope the reader understands what is intended to be conveyed by this; I think I understand it myself. It is a mental conception of nature by which the artist does not look upon nature as made up of tangible substances, but as an appearance only—a conception not new to philosophy, but contrary to all primitive art, and indeed to the whole of art, whether primitive or not, which is founded on the imitation of substance rather than the interpretation of effects. Now, there is a certain positivism in portrait that draws painters continually back from advanced methods in the interpretation of nature to the clear and decided primitive methods which never become wholly obsolete in this branch of art, as they have done, for example, in landscape. One of the most noted pictures exhibited in France during the year 1891 was that of a famous Parisian beauty, Madame G., and the painter himself, M. Courtois, told me that he had been attracted to her as a subject for his art, because, when seen in profile, she reminded him so strongly of pictures by the early Italian masters, and he painted her in their sense. His picture was entirely successful, not only amongst artists and critics who appreciated what was archaic in its taste, but amongst the general public, which does not care much for the early Italians, or for primitive art of any kind. The clear relief of the well and carefully drawn profile, the simplicity of the costume, and a fearless serenity in the looks and attitude of the lady, who seemed as if she had lived hundreds of years before this age of self-consciousness and affectations, all conspired to give a certain freshness and rarity to the painting which are not likely to pass away; and although it is not usually safe to predict the tastes even of the near future, not to mention the remote, I do certainly believe that this is one of the few contemporary portraits that have a prospect of immortality. Perhaps, in five hundred years, people will look upon that frank face and think it wonderful that amongst so many attractive women who lived when Carnot was President of the Republic this lady was supreme, and then they will account for her supremacy by a certain peculiarity and originality, remote from mere prettiness, which the artist has preserved all the better by his adoption of a primitive treatment. We see, then, that a recurrence to earlier art may be successful, even now, in portrait, and it would be easy to adduce other examples; but if a landscape-painter were to go back to the early Italians for his models, and paint landscape on their principles, he would no more succeed than a coach-builder who went back to the days of Queen Anne.

This may be fortunate for portrait and unfortunate for landscape, for this reason, that as in the study of language it is always good for us to go back to the rudiments and learn them over and over again, and as in music the most elementary practice is constantly repeated even by accomplished musicians; so in painting the recurrence to early habits of observation, and even to early patience in performance, may fortify an art that tends constantly to a loss of strength and substance in its progress to that interpretation of evanescent effect now known by the term "Impressionism." It is not well to employ foreign words when an English one equally good can be found, but as in this case there is no English equivalent, I may say that portrait is the *rajeunissement* of the art of painting; it is in portrait that the elements of this art are constantly learned over again, and it is in portrait that a painter may go back to early principles of work with the least risk of finding himself hopelessly out of fashion.

Although this art is simple in the sense of requiring very little imagination and very little intricacy of composition, and although the canvas is for the most part covered with still-life painting that is easy enough, if anything can be called easy in the fine arts, there remains the great technical difficulty of flesh-painting, when colour is attempted, which nothing but great natural talent, joined to indomitable perseverance, has ever entirely overcome. It is like *quality* in landscape, especially the quality of skies, which is indispensable to fine landscape-painting and of immense difficulty. Therefore, whilst portrait requires more perfect drawing than any other branch of art, it requires at least as perfect painting as any other, and is in itself a complete technical school, for it includes even composition when it has to deal with groups.

In sculpture the practice of portraiture is less in harmony with the highest aspirations of the art, because these tend always towards ideal and abstract forms, whereas portraiture is the study of individuality, and individuality is the exact opposite of the abstract and the ideal. A compromise between the two is effected by idealising the individual—that is, by disengaging from the actual forms presented by nature, which have often been modified by accident and disease, or by unhygienic habits of life, the forms that the individual might have possessed if his habits and circumstances had always been favourable to his own special physical perfection. Every head suggests a personal and individual perfection to which it has not attained. The difficulty here is in the loss of character involved by seeking for what may be called the individual ideal, since, as every caricaturist knows, character is closely connected with imperfection, so that the purification of the visible form involves always some sacrifice of interest.

The process followed by a sculptor in making an idealised bust is, in fact, just the opposite of that followed by the caricaturist in a sketch intended to be amusing, as the sculptor passes over or attenuates the peculiarities that the caricaturist seizes upon with the utmost avidity, and exaggerates beyond the limits of nature. Both sculptor and caricaturist are untruthful, but on opposite principles.

The desire to give more life to contemporary sculpture has led it in some instances away from the frigid ideal, and therefore brought it nearer to painting. If, for example, the principles of Carpeaux were to prevail very generally in sculpture, or rather his one dominant principle—*as much vitality as marble will permit*—the practice of such sculpture would be very favourable to portrait, because it would be favourable to individuality. Since Carpeaux put so much life into his groups there has been a great increase of life in French portrait-sculpture of all kinds. Rodin, for example, puts a vitality and an individuality into his busts, and an intensity of personal existence, that are foreign to classical sentiment, and more allied to Victor Hugo than to Racine. Ringel d'Illzac has produced a large number of medallions of celebrated men, always recognisable at the first glance, and full of the marks of individuality in a double sense, for they show both the personality of the subject, and the strange, strong, personal nature of the artist who could see his subject in such an original way. In sculpture, the medallion is more favourable to character than the bust, as the medallion seems to allow more freedom of exaggeration. The most modern of sculptors—those who are most in harmony with modern habits of thought—can hardly be accused of flattery. I remember a plain man whose features were immortalised by a celebrated sculptor in a bust, and he wrote an inscription for it in which he claimed equality in ugliness with Socrates—a claim fully borne out by the unconscious marble.

Modern portraiture, in sculpture, does well to confine itself chiefly to the bust and the medallion, as in the complete statue the difficulty of costume is seldom happily overcome. But this subject of costume in portraiture of all kinds is important enough to deserve more ample treatment.

CHAPTER II

PAINTING AND CARVING THE SOUL

THE highest claim advanced for the arts of portraiture is that they do not represent the body of man only, but his mind and even his soul, that is, his innermost and most permanent self in which he feels most intensely, and thinks, hopes, believes, with the most perfect sincerity. We imagine that if we could see this central being within the man we should know him truly for what he is, and the claim of artists who have the most exalted notions about their craft, is that they are able to make this central being visible for us.

The subject is extremely complex, and likely to involve a writer in that kind of contradiction which comes from the employment of ill-defined terms with occasional variations of meaning. If I were to say that portraiture can only imitate what is physical, the obvious answer would be that physical aspects themselves have a mental significance. A painter, or even a draughtsman, might say "my forms represent flesh and the bones under it, but as the material shapes of a man represent his mental habits, my work exhibits his mind too, though only in a second degree, and not directly as might be done in a written biography." The draughtsman might go a step further than this, and argue as follows: "I am obliged to represent matter, but I am by no means bound down to the matter I see before me. I am perfectly free to idealise it, and to disengage from material nature what I perceive to be the mental significance of the subject." This latter part of the argument seems the stronger, that all great portraiture unquestionably does idealise, and usually with a view to making the mind of the subject in some way more clear to us, either in the way of intellect or of character, the only exception being the kind of portraiture which aims at the idealisation of physical beauty.

There are, however, two fatal objections to this reasoning, the first is that the physical shapes of men, even when they seem most expressive,

PORTRAIT OF QUEVEDO

PAINTED BY MURILLO

ETCHED BY HENRI MANESSE

DON FRANCESCO QUEVEDO VILLEGAS was born in 1580 and died in 1645.

Few who are not Spaniards can appreciate his wit, essentially Spanish. Quevedo was one of the rare men of letters who have possessed, in equal strength, the distinct powers of acquisition and production. He was an extraordinary linguist and scholar, a most versatile and prolific writer, and he gained unusual experience as a man of the world. The victim of a political enemy, then a minister, he spent the last four years of his life in a dungeon, from which he was delivered in time to die in so-called liberty. This is all that can be said in a short note about the brilliant and unfortunate Quevedo.

I selected this portrait because it is the only one with spectacles, by an old master, that I remember, except another of the same writer by Velasquez; and secondly, because it is interesting to study the face when we know that the original was a man of wit and learning—even too much wit, indeed, as it is difficult to forgive him for having turned to ridicule the exquisite story of Orpheus and Eurydice.

Murillo pinx. Imp Willmann Paris H.Manesse sc

only reveal a part of the mind and character, and are misleading, precisely because they do reveal something but not all. If they revealed nothing whatever there would be no deception; as it is, the physical appearances are constantly making us believe that we know people that we only see, their faces seem so legible. In reality something is legible, but the illegible part of the mind and character is quite as important, and in cases of this kind an incomplete reading is as useless as the incomplete reading of a physician's ill-written prescription, when only a part of it can be made out clearly, and the rest is guess-work. The truest revelation of a man is not his physical appearance but his life and work, and even the life and work often fail to show the man as he is, since he may have found it necessary to assume a character and follow a profession that do not properly belong to him. In cases where the profession was the natural development of the inborn faculties, as with Napoleon and Turner, the career often throws so strong a light on the nature of the man that we see how little the portraits have to tell, that is, how little the physical features can have revealed to contemporaries. The slight portraits that remain for us give the impression that Turner was shrewd and sly, and perhaps one might go so far as to guess that he had a tendency to secretiveness, and that a nature like his would probably be selfish in its purposes. We should say, too, that he was not, in the conventional sense, a gentleman, but we should all of us go wrong on the most important point; we should not discover the extraordinary refinement of his genius, the most rare and most exquisite elegance of his taste. That refinement and elegance were far more delicate than what is necessary for mere current gentility, and yet they do not seem to have been visible externally to any one. It is believed, indeed, that Turner's habit of solitude was due in great part to his knowledge that his outward appearance could convey no notion of his real superiority. "It is evident," says Mr. Cosmo Monkhouse, "that in spite of his clear little blue eyes, and his small hands and feet, his appearance was not one likely to prepossess women, or to inspire consideration among men, and that one of the ills from which his painting-room afforded a refuge may have often been a wounded vanity. There can be nothing more constantly galling to a sensitive man of genius than to feel that his appearance does not inspire the respect he feels due to him." If it were true that the physical form reveals the constitution of the mind, the genius of Turner would have expressed itself in a beautiful, or at least a poetical face, full of charm reflected from the loveliest scenes of nature in their most enchanting hours. Napoleon, on the contrary, had a face of extraordinary beauty and refinement, and, when a young man, he had a figure which, if

too thin for manly perfection, was still truly expressive of his extreme personal activity. The failure of Napoleon's physical appearance is that it gives a false impression of his moral nature. It did not lead men wrong as to his intellectual power or his transcendent faculty of command. The face combined a singular beauty with authority and severity. The beauty really means nothing whatever as to character, one way or another, it is simply physical form and no more, that is to say, an agreeable shape of bones, gristles, muscles, covered with a smooth skin, pallid with the pallor of an ivory statuette. The authority and severity are in their nature entirely unintelligible until explained by written history. The authority might have been the benevolent authority of a wise father who looks a little stern, but is in reality full of the most self-denying and far-seeing kindness, the severity might have been the self-command of the Stoic, who cares little for ruling others, but is determined to be the master of his own passions and the director of his own life. Who could know, without other information than a portrait can supply, that the authority, in Napoleon's case, meant the resolution to sacrifice regiments and even armies to his private ends, and that the severity meant the power of deciding that the Duc d'Enghien was to be shot like a dog in a ditch? And even if by a lucky guess, aided perhaps by the uniform, some critic were to discover the military pitilessness of Napoleon, surely he could never imagine that a face so full of beauty, and apparently so full of refinement, could have belonged to a soldier whose way of getting on in society was by inspiring terror, and who remained coarse, ignorant, and ill-bred. Few persons now living have seen the terrible Emperor, but many of us remember the face of his successor, which at the time of his greatest power was universally looked upon as inscrutable and enigmatic. Well, then if the living face itself was inscrutable, how could a portrait-painter be expected to exhibit the character through the face? Were painters to see more in it than was intelligible to the most observant diplomatists who had the keenest personal interest in detecting the thoughts behind the mask? All that the artist really did was to seize upon some very external expression, most commonly that of reserve, if reserve is an expression at all. I remember one exception in the Salon of 1863, the portrait by Flandrin which attracted much attention in that year. Flandrin perceived that Louis Napoleon in his home life had often a kind and soft expression of countenance, and this did not belie him, for there was an amiable as well as a ruthless element in his nature. Flandrin seized upon this, and made one of the best existing portraits of famous men, but the student of history has nothing to learn from it as to the schemer of the Coup d'État. All that the well-painted canvas has to tell us is that the

Man of the Second of December was capable, at times, of looking mild and benignant, as if he had never commanded any street-massacre in his life.

I have said that there were two fatal objections to the argument that portrait-painters or sculptors can paint or carve the soul. The first has just been stated, and may be restated more briefly as the difficulty of making clearly visible in art what is never more than partially and uncertainly visible even in nature itself. The second objection is that if the soul could be represented by an imitation of material forms, that could only be done by an artist who himself possessed mental powers of the most transcendent eminence, such as there is no reason for attributing to the highly-skilled craftsmen who usually portray their most celebrated contemporaries, and portray them, it is admitted, successfully. The reason why we have such profound admiration for the intellect of a Shakespeare or a Scott is because their minds must have included all those which they represented. There is an illusion even here. We fancy that Shakespeare comprehended Cæsar, and Scott, Cœur de Lion, the exact truth being that each comprehended only just so much of Cæsar or Cœur de Lion as he was able to represent, or rather that Shakespeare was able by a process of substitution to put a conception of his own in the place of the real Cæsar, a conception that we take as true because we know so little of the original, and that Scott put a gentleman of high spirit speaking modern English (which no one could ever do who had not modern ideas) in the place of a Crusader who knew neither our language nor our ways of thinking. Still, if these creative intellects did not include the real men whose names they played with to help the illusion, they did, at all events, include their own creations, and their creations speak and act, they are living souls. We cannot say as much for painted canvas and marble. The poet looks on his mother's portrait and exclaims, "Oh that those lips had language!" but they have *not* language. The hyperbole of praise is to say that a likeness is a speaking likeness, yet no word breaks the everlasting silence.

The portrait represents one aspect, one moment of a life, and the external aspect only for that moment. It is neither the task nor the duty of the artist to see more than what is visible, the analysis of a mind belongs to literature, and so does any account of its personal and peculiar ways of action.

I hope that if any portrait-painter reads these pages (a most improbable supposition, but the unexpected does occasionally happen), he will not accuse me of any desire to lower the dignity of his art. I merely state the reasons why it is possible for the art of portraiture to exist. If the artist were bound to understand the mind of his subject, he would require the

same experience and the same education, which in most cases would be entirely incompatible with the long and laborious technical training of any really accomplished artist. Now, there has been a very recent example of what I may venture to call the *exteriority* of portraiture. M. Bonnat has painted M. Renan, and the result is one of the most remarkable portraits of modern or of any other times. M. Renan, in one of his most interesting prefaces, speaks about what people will say of him in five hundred years, and what degree of credit they will attach to the amazing legends that already cluster about his name. It is, I believe, by no means presumptuous in M. Renan to imagine that five centuries hence his name will not be forgotten, and it would not be presumptuous in M. Bonnat to imagine that when those centuries have passed away his portrait will remain profoundly and inexhaustibly interesting. What will be the nature of that interest? Will it be because the painter has depicted the soul or intellect of the greatest French prose-writer, and one of the most famous scholars of his time? Certainly that could not be the reason, for whatever posterity may desire to know about the mental constitution of Renan it will be able to learn abundantly from his writings, and better than any one except Renan himself could possibly set it forth. No, the real reason why the portrait will be interesting is because in its unscrupulous and unflattering veracity it shows the physical nature of the man with a glimpse, not of his intellect which is beyond the painter's reach, but of his temper which is not disposed to take anything, even his own labours, too seriously, and seems to amuse itself equally with the adulation of his admirers and the fanaticism of his enemies. The plain face, and even the fat body, are full of scarcely suppressed laughter. Is this the end of so much research into the gravest problems of all history? At least the painter tells us that the burden of the doleful past and the toilsome labouring in Semitic languages have weighed lightly on this man's spirit. And if we look further for some sign of the grace and distinction that must always belong to a literary artist of supreme rank, we find no evidence to answer any expectation. The hand that wrote the perfect prose is coarse and ugly with curiously misshapen nails that greviously require both scissors and a nail-brush. The picture is at once a record and a criticism of personal appearance, a sort of feminine criticism like that applied by ladies to the toilet of learned and too negligent men. And the satisfaction that posterity will find in this account of Renan painted whilst he was alive will be the satisfaction of mediocrity in finding itself at least in some respects superior to eminence.

If the elegance of Renan's genius is invisible in his portrait what shall we say about the strongest characteristics of Carlyle? Of elegance he

had none, but he had certain powers and also certain deficiencies, neither of which are to be detected in any carved or painted portrait that has been made of him. All that they tell us is that he was thoughtful and sad. If we knew nothing whatever about the original we might say, "The soul of this man has gone out into the universe and come back disappointed." We might perhaps almost guess that he would consider the starry heavens "a sad sight," and we should certainly conclude that physical illness had done something to produce mental depression. The presence of intellectual power, of some kind, would seem probable, but we should be entirely unable to determine either its nature or its limitations. We should not know that the original was gifted with great literary force yet destitute alike of scientific and artistic perception. We should infer perhaps from the expression some degree of malevolence, but should never imagine that the quiet-looking old man excelled all satirists in the faculty of personal abuse, in the art of so describing his contemporaries as to make them invariably contemptible. The portraits, too, would leave us in complete ignorance of another gift which Carlyle possessed in a remarkable degree and which was of infinite service to his reputation, his peculiar kind of humour, which always aroused curiosity as to what he had to say and gave the reader a kind of ill-natured satisfaction even when he knew that the saying was unjust. When all these deductions have been made what remains of Carlyle? Nothing but the appearance of a plain and pensive elderly man in imperfect health, but this is a description that applies to many who are not Carlyle, and if so peculiar a spirit as his leaves no expression of its own peculiarities on canvas or in marble, how are we to expect from the graphic or plastic arts any accurate reflection of spirits that have not a tenth part of his powerful individuality?

When the subject of a portrait combines in himself two distinct characters, it is not the more elevated of the two that is likely to be represented, but the more habitual and obvious. In Sir Walter Scott the two characters were those of a country gentleman and a great literary artist. The painters usually represented the country gentleman, because that character being in itself simple and externally visible was within their reach. A few attempts were made to give Scott a poetical character, but it was not easy to do this unless at the expense of truth, because his strong common-sense always prevented him from assuming poetical airs, and there was nothing in his outward appearance to suggest poetical rather than practical habits of thought. In complete ignorance of the inner nature of the man we might, I think, get so near the truth as to

take Scott for a country squire or for a lawyer with rural tastes, and in any case for a very keen-witted, intelligent Scotchman, but there is no evidence in his face, as it has been painted, that he possessed the rarest and mightiest of artistic faculties, that of tragic invention. One of the most eminent men of letters in our own day, Matthew Arnold, united in himself the gifts of poet and critic. It is impossible to unite the two in a portrait and, in fact, the portraits of him convey the idea of critical acumen but without tenderness or sweetness, yet both are necessary to a poet, and he had them. A greater poet, whose portrait is to be found in the present volume, is amongst illustrious authors one of the most favourable subjects for pictorial or plastic representation, but perhaps we associate the head and face of Lord Tennyson with poetry because we are all aware of his eminence in that art. I remember, when a very young man, being a fellow-passenger, on a steamer, with the author of *In Memoriam*, and being greatly interested and attracted by the noble head and face, at that time very little known to the public. My conclusion was that they indicated the artistic faculty, and in this I was not mistaken, but I was unable to fix upon the kind of art in which the faculty had been exercised. In the portrait by Mr. Watts a dreamy and abstracted expression is insisted upon; he may have had an opportunity for observing this, and was right in keeping decidedly to one expression to the exclusion of all others, still, it is only one aspect of Lord Tennyson and that not the most intelligent. Here he has been eating lotos, the lotos of reverie. Who would suppose that the living original was at his own times a lively and humorous companion and teller of good stories?

Intellectual faces do not appear, in nature itself, the brightest or most intelligent. The appearance of brightness is due to mere cerebral activity which may be of the most vain and futile kind, or the apparently intelligent person may be occupied, not vainly as to the nature of his work but out of season, as when an inventor toils to invent something that has been invented already and superseded. Yet as it is cerebral activity only, however useless, that gives an expression of intelligence to the countenance, the man who has got beyond that particular activity and rests in clearer knowledge will not have the apparent brightness of busy inexperience. At a distance from the centres of intellectual life men may live in a condition of enthusiasm for obsolete ideas. Any one who has it may be brightened by it, yet it may be due, really, to his insufficiency of intelligence, that is, to his inability to apprehend the thoughts of his strongest contemporaries, so that, ultimately, it would be the laggard slowness of his wits that gave them liberty to disport themselves in their own way.

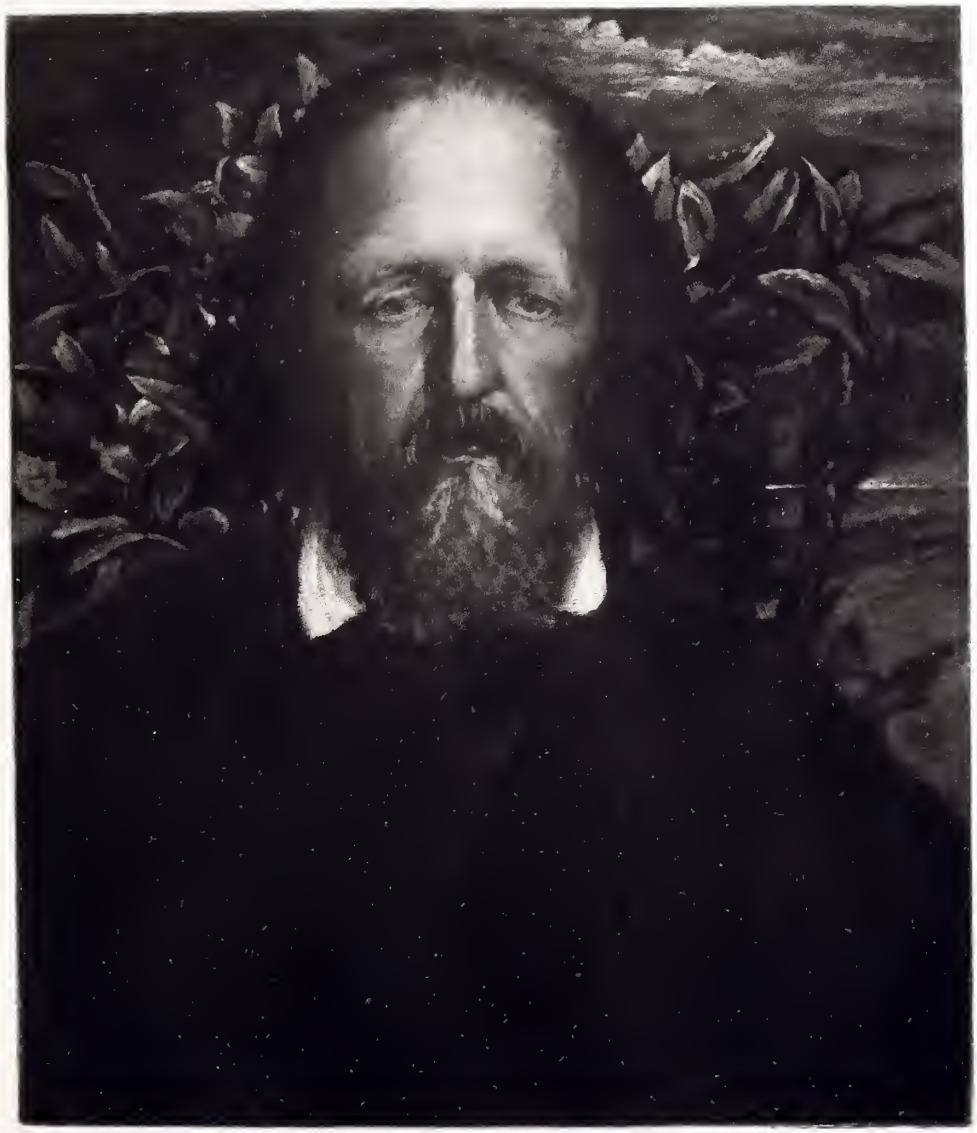
TENNYSON

PAINTED BY G. F. WATTS, R.A.

ENGRAVED IN MEZZOTINT BY F. SHORT

THIS portrait of Tennyson as Poet Laureate, that is, with the laurel not on the brow but in the background, was painted in the maturity of the poet's age (I have not the exact date), and exhibited along with the painter's other works at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1882. A subsequent portrait shows Lord Tennyson in old age, and Mr. Watts painted an earlier one in 1859.

The likeness is good, but the expression is melancholy and dreamy. No doubt the painter had observed it. Future ages will care enough for our late Laureate to take an interest in all his aspects and all his moods.



The conclusion is that whilst portraiture in the graphic and plastic arts is able to convey something about the character of its subject, it describes mind so partially and inadequately that its descriptions must always be in themselves insufficient and misleading, and that the real interest of it is either in supplementing what we know already about a man with some account of his personal appearance, or in presenting the insoluble enigma of a man who can be seen as clearly as if he were still alive, yet of whom we know next to nothing because he does not speak or act. It is not painting but literature that can adequately describe mind, and for this reason it is indisputable that literature is the higher art of the two. Still, as the graphic arts describe the bodily appearance with an accuracy to which literature cannot pretend, their value is beyond all estimate in its own way, and they may throw side-lights on mind itself by contributing what is visible of the physical constitution.

CHAPTER III

THE RELIGIOUS PORTRAIT

IT was a practice common in the Middle Ages and down to the Renascence, and it is still a practice in making pictures or statues of dignitaries of the Roman Church, to represent the subject of the portrait in the attitude of prayer. The modern laity have abandoned this for reasons which have never, so far as I know, been articulately expressed, but which exist not the less forcibly in the modern mind. Both the practice itself, and its subsequent abandonment, seem to me equally justifiable.

The hour of prayer, for a real believer, is the highest and best hour. If it is an honour to be received in audience by an earthly sovereign, the honour must be inestimably greater when the sovereign is the King of Kings. Yet he who prays, at least in the Christian forms, is saved from too great self-abasement by being more than a living atom in the universe; he is entitled to claim a filial relationship to the Divinity, he does not prostrate himself on the earth before some power incapable of affection. The act of prayer is, therefore, in Christian worship, singular amongst all human actions in its combination of extreme humility with undiminished dignity, and this is a combination which shows a serious man's face at his best, as it delivers him from all the petty vanities, anxieties, and conventionalities of this world of trifles which, for the time being, lies as completely beneath him as if he had already quitted it.

The choice of the hour of prayer was excellent in several ways from the artist's own special point of view; it was prudent in the interests of art. The subject of the picture was not in motion, he might remain, indeed, for some time absolutely motionless, so that the stillness of the painted figure answered to the silence and tranquillity of the chapel or the closet. And as to costume, at least a grave and decorous costume, orderly in every fold, seemed called for by the function itself, as men dress

FAMILY PORTRAITS

PAINTED BY AMBROGIO BORGOGNONE

REPRODUCED IN PHOTOGRAVURE BY BOUSSOD AND VALADON

(*National Gallery*)

THIS series of family portraits has been chosen for two reasons: first, because it contains several good and faithful studies of profiles; and secondly, because it includes, in a single picture, not less than nine devotional portraits. The hand in the left upper corner is evidently typical of benediction.

This painting was executed on silk, afterwards mounted on wood. It was part of a standard, the opposite part representing women in prayer, and the centre of the composition God the Father.

The sincerity and simplicity of the painting are evidently so great that the likenesses must have been accurate. Nobody knows who the men were. Their portraits are good studies, particularly of devotional expression. This is a curious instance of the immortality sometimes conferred by graphic art on mere physical forms, whilst it records only one moment of a biography. In the present case even the very names are lost.

carefully when they go to church, whilst in the case of high officials, whether secular or ecclesiastic, the assumption of their robes of office seemed without worldly pride when the wearer laid his magnificence at the feet of Christ. One of the most recent examples is the kneeling statue of one who was a king only by the inheritance of a shadowy royalty, and who never sat upon any material throne. The pious and honourable prince who was called Henry the Fifth of France prays for ever in the coronation mantle that he never wore, and on a cushion near him rests the crown that was never placed upon his head. The suppliant appears to ask a blessing on a royalty still to be realised. When the subject of a kneeling portrait is some gorgeous prelate of the Roman Church kneeling at his cushioned *prie-dieu*, the function is not open to criticism, as bishops and cardinals do really kneel in that magnificent manner during the imposing services of their religion, and if a Protestant thinks that personages so extremely decorative must be too conscious of their splendours for the most perfect earnestness, the answer is simply that these things belong to custom and tradition, and lie outside of the choice of the individual.

How it came to pass that the subjects of portraits were less and less frequently represented in the act of prayer after the close of the Middle Ages can hardly be explained in a sentence. There is a theory that the practice has been abandoned on account of the decay of faith, but in our day the most earnest believers feel an objection to being painted on their knees, as if there were a certain want of delicacy in exhibiting their piety to all who might see the picture in present or in future times. Besides this, modern formalism has curious limits and restrictions of its own, so that people who do not really believe very much, and who have not much faith in the practical efficacy of prayer except as a relief and a consolation, are still perfectly willing to take part in customary services which are followed by others of their own rank in society, but do not wish to set up any individual pretension to religious orthodoxy or zeal. Lastly, we have the modern scientific conception of the universe as governed absolutely by inexorable natural laws, and although those who recognise them and see that it is impossible to escape from them for an instant, do not always rejoice in them as King David did in the theocratic law of his age and country, still their very belief in the fixity of natural law, or in other words, the nature of their faith itself, prevents them from petitioning for its repeal. So that here, too, we have a reason why prayer is less the habitual attitude of the modern than it was of the mediæval sage. And in all this there is no proper place for praise or blame, for ridicule or for respect, in one case

or the other. If the object is to get rain, it is not more virtuous to ask for it than to explode dynamite in the upper air, and when the object was to avert a pestilence, it was not ridiculous in our forefathers to endeavour to turn aside the wrath of God by a multiplicity of masses instead of looking to their drainage and their drinking-water.[1]

But from the point of view which concerns us specially at present, that of the fine arts (and the same might be said of equal truth with regard to poetry), everything that carries the mind and habits of mankind from the region of faith to that of science is always a distinct loss, and the disappearance of the praying portrait is infinitely to be regretted.

One reason for this regret is that it is difficult, in any other way, to unite a whole family, of the most different ages, in a single elevated sentiment. The praying portrait allowed the artist, without improbability, to give to the younger members of a family the same seriousness and dignity, and the same indifference to human observation that belonged for the time being to their parents, and as all knelt gravely on the same floor, in their best attire, with hands joined in the same act of adoration, the picture gave an impression of domestic unity and discipline that are the strength of a household when all believe alike, and when there is neither tyranny in the elders nor hypocrisy in the young. In the quaint sets of family portraits by Borgognone in the National Gallery, painted originally on a silken standard, the men on one side, the women on the other, and God the Father in the middle, the men, nine in number, are entirely without that *mutual* action or influence which is usually considered necessary to a composition, yet although this part is but one-third of the whole, the *common* sentiment and the gravity of expression and demeanour that all the men have equally, gives a complete moral unity to the work. Its pictorial unity is oddly interfered with by the intrusion of the hand of some unknown saint in blessing.

In the days when great personages were frequently represented in the act of praying, and saints or angels were the usual subjects of religious

[1] In all cases like these when a benefit or a deliverance is desired, men take what they believe to be the most efficacious means of obtaining the object of their desire. If a Parisian is anxious about the effects of his impure drinking-water, he may filter and boil it, or he may burn candles at the shrine of St. Geneviève. The intention, in both cases, is one of a right and rational care for his own health; he would be acting in either case with a proper selfishness, yet the burning of the candles at the holy and splendid shrine is, at the same time, an act pious in itself, and surrounded by most picturesque, most romantic, and most poetical circumstances, whilst the use of the filter and the pan has none of these qualities to recommend it, being merely useful for the prevention of disease. There is no place for praise or blame in either case, since the object is the same in both, and it is a selfish object, yet one method for attaining it is religious and picturesque, the other scientific and not picturesque in the least.

THE BLESSED DOMINICANS

PAINTED BY FRA GIOVANNI ANGELICO

REPRODUCED IN PHOTOGRAVURE BY ANNAN AND SWAN

(National Gallery)

THIS is one of the small compartments of the picture called "Christ."

The painting is in tempera on wood and is divided into five compartments, all twelve and a half inches high. The widths are

8½ inches | 2 feet 1 inch | 2 feet 4½ inches | 2 feet 1 inch | 8½ inches.

The compartment here reproduced is the narrow one to the spectator's right.

The central compartment shows Christ triumphant with a choir of angels, including trumpeters and other musicians. The wide compartments to right and left show the most famous personages of religious history who are amongst the blessed, and the narrow end compartments are occupied by the blessed Dominicans of both sexes.

This is given as an example of absolutely sincere religious painting by an artist who really believed and who always began his day's work with prayer. See the note on Scheffer's St. Monica and St. Augustine.

pictures, the same work might bring together personages belonging to the natural and the supernatural worlds. Instances of this are so numerous that it is impossible to give a catalogue even of the most important, but I may mention one as a typical example. This is an altar-piece by Rubens, originally painted for a church at Brussels, but now in the gallery at Vienna. It is a triptych of which the central subject represents the Holy Virgin, enthroned, and giving a chasuble to St. Ildephonso, the bishop of Toledo. Cherubs are flying in the air above, and the Virgin is attended by a small court of quite modern maids of honour, probably ladies whom Rubens knew. I have not at hand any biography of St. Ildephonso, but suppose that as bishop of Toledo he must have been a real personage, though the gift of the chasuble by the Holy Virgin may perhaps be mythical. In one of the side compartments an Archduke Albert kneels in a mantle of state, wearing the collar of an order of knighthood, and beyond him stands his patron saint. The Archduchess prays in the opposite compartment, and close to her stands her patron saint laying a crown adorned with roses on a volume by her side. Here, then, in this picture we have the most complete transition from simple portraits of the living, probably good likenesses, to imaginary portraits of the dead, and purely fanciful representations of disembodied spirits, the whole in a single clever composition, and harmonised so perfectly as to seem quite a rational arrangement, at least in the artistic sense. The praying portrait permits of this mingling of the celestial and terrestial worlds, as he who prays has already traversed in thought and aspiration the interval that separates them. In a certain intelligible sense, though not in the literal or physical sense, this composition by Rubens is *true*. It is true if taken to mean only that whilst the Archduke and his wife were saying their prayers their patron saints seemed present in their thoughts and in their closets, and the Virgin and cherubs in some place not very far away where a bishop could attend her little court and receive a gift from her royal hands.

And now, to realise the distance traversed in the direction of rationalism since the days of Rubens, let the reader try to imagine a modern painter making two state portraits with the same supernatural surroundings. The idea is so incongruous that I find I cannot, even in writing, suggest the names of great personages who might possibly be painted in that way without seeming to have a satirical intention, and the newspapers would accuse me of sneering at royalty and casting ridicule on religion. Are we only two hundred and fifty years from the days of Rubens? It seems as if we were a thousand.

CHAPTER IV

THE ANALOGY BETWEEN PORTRAIT AND LANDSCAPE

THERE is a very close and interesting analogy between Portrait and Landscape in the phases which are called "expression" in one, and "effect" in the other.

There is for every human being an expression that is most characteristic of the person, and there is for every landscape an effect that is most characteristic of the place. A judicious artist, after careful watching, discovers what is most characteristic, and represents it.

But the analogy goes further, so that both branches of art present a similar and all but insuperable difficulty.

It may happen that the *changeableness itself* is far more characteristic than any single aspect, however interesting. And how is the painter to convey the idea of this mobility? How is he to explain, without the use of words, that the expression or effect is not to be taken as permanent, or even predominant, but is in its nature so transitory that it will be succeeded by many others entirely different, and each of them an effacement of that which went before?

Many artists have tried to suggest this transitoriness, and though the enterprise is one of the most difficult in the whole range of the fine arts, their attempts have come occasionally so near to success that their ambition has, at least, been justified. There is only one way of conveying the suggestion and that is by rapidity and evanescence in execution.

The *precise* styles of painting, dependent upon extreme firmness and clearness of line, are never favourable to the suggestion of transient expression or effect. The style of Holbein, for example, is not a good one for this purpose, though I am well aware that there are movement and expression in some of his minor designs, particularly in "The Dance of Death." In portrait, the deliberate tranquillity of his manner and its linear severity are both against him so far as this special quality is concerned, though they tell in his favour when the object is the expression of simple serenity and calm. The styles that best suggest the mobility

of life themselves display the vitality of the artist in the energy or lightness of his execution. In some centuries these qualities are very little appreciated, because they are associated with the idea of haste or carelessness, at other times they are valued as signs of life. At the time when the English Pre-Raphaelite movement seemed likely to impose upon all artists extreme care in execution and a minute attention to detail, the lighter and swifter styles were associated with insufficiency, and almost with moral wrong. It seemed as if the further and closer study of nature must of necessity lead to still greater completeness of representation, but it did not. It led to the desire for unity which was found hardly compatible with the multiplicity of minute details, and also to the ambition to fix in art what is transitory and evanescent in nature. These desires have found their satisfaction in Impressionism, in which each separate work of art, whether it be an etching, a pastel, or a painting, has for its object the unity which comes from the record of one idea in one work, and the fixing of a mental impression before it has had time to fade away. As in politics a party is asking for the recognition of the principle, "One man, one vote," so in art there is a party that might express its aim or its convictions in the formula, "One work, one idea." According to this conception the single work of art would limit itself strictly to some passing phase of nature, but have not modern landscape painters been doing this for many years already in their studies of transient effects? And have not many of the best of them, especially in water-colour, habitually sacrificed detail to effect, as when the details of a mountain-side are veiled by a passing shower? It is well known that landscape-painters themselves most value their rapid memoranda of effect and colour, and that the subsequent development of the subject on the large painted canvas is not so often done for their own satisfaction as to hold a place on the walls of a salon or academy.

This would lead us to the conclusion that as the sketch of landscape is often in reality the best suggestion of the changeableness in nature, so in portrait the sketch may most effectively convey the idea of mobility in the original, and therefore that visible swiftness of work may be better for this purpose than tranquil elaboration. A style like that of Frans Hals, for example, which was so little appreciated for a long time after his death, is much better adapted to the expression of laughter, which is of short duration, than the style of a Gerard Dow.

Still, even with the most favourable of all kinds of execution, that which best conveys the notion of evanescence to the mind, painting can only suggest that a change is probable, it cannot note *the change itself*

as poets and novelists constantly do with the most powerful and interesting effect in literature. Here, again, the parallel holds good with landscape, for however inferior the word-painter may be to the colour-painter in that department of art, he can not only describe the colouring of a landscape as it is at one moment but follow its phases as they take place, and when this is done well it gives a life to the written description that is not to be attained by any other artifice. For example, no changes in nature are so interesting as those of dawn and sunset, unless it be the change that precedes a storm. A writer who is master of his craft will follow the gradual process of substitution by which a natural scene passes from one scheme of colour to another entirely different, or mark the more sudden revolution that destroys some perfectly effective arrangement of light and dark to replace it with another that reverses all its oppositions. The novelist has equally great changes at his command, as when a bright and cheerful countenance is suddenly disturbed by the receipt of unwelcome news, and he may note to a second the occurrence of one of those decisive epochs in the drama of human existence after which life can never again be what it has been before. And here, perhaps, the analogy with landscape rather fails us, for however desolate a natural scene may be the hour will surely come when it will be cheerful again with sunshine and forget its gloom, whilst if human life is once darkened by one of the great tragic sorrows the gaiety of the individual existence has gone out for ever, and there is no encouragement but in hope for others, especially for the as yet unsacrificed future of the young.

The same scene has occasionally been represented by a landscape-painter under the most different effects, one study for each aspect, and when many such various studies are exhibited together they have an interest in the light they throw upon each other which none of them could possess alone. It has sometimes occurred to me that it would be reasonable, in the case of very changeable faces, to paint them under a dozen different aspects, though it is to be feared that such a practice would seldom please the sitter, who usually wishes to look serene and dignified, if of the male sex, and agreeable, as well as pretty, if belonging to the other. Rembrandt painted and etched himself so frequently that this idea was actually realised in his case, and we have him in the most various moods and tempers, from open laughter to a morose reserve; and though he never flattered his own features, so far as to make them in any way beautiful or attractive, there are still degrees in the confession of his plainness. There are variations, also, in the animation and intelligence of the face, and especially of the eye, which is sometimes most

acute and penetrating, as in the "Rembrandt leaning on a Stone Sill," at others indifferent and almost dull. In this he accurately followed the true changes of a human face, which cannot be permanently bright any more than it can be permanently hilarious. Even the beauty of the most beautiful women has its variations, if I may venture to say so. Those who have the privilege of knowing some beautiful woman do not usually speak of her beauty as a fixed quality, like that of a statue, but say to each other after meeting her, "She was very beautiful to-day," or "She did not look her best." Still, the most changeful faces are never the most beautiful, as beauty of a high kind cannot exist without perfection of form, or a very near approach to it, and this perfection must always be visible, whether it is aided by good temper and a favourable light, or diminished by their opposites. The faces that most resemble the changefulness of a Highland landscape are often pleasing and always interesting, which is their peculiar attraction, and their interest is of the mind more than of the body. Beauty is still beauty when reduced to the condition of simple existence without either thought or feeling. The neutral face, which has not beauty, is nothing till it is illuminated by electricity from the heart or the brain. And so, in wild landscape, there is always the suggestion of a mind manifesting itself through its infinite vicissitudes. The suggestion is illusory, but irresistible.[1]

[1] I keep the concluding line of this chapter as originally written, but on re-reading the MS. it occurs to me that some reviewer will probably accuse me of Atheism, an accusation often incurred by those who perceive clearly the distinction between the human and the not-human in the universe. The sublime or beautiful effects of natural landscape have very frequently an *appearance* of intention as when the lighting of a landscape seems disposed with great taste and judgment, like cleverly managed effects in the scenery of a theatre, but that this impression is illusory seems clear from the following considerations:—1. The appearance of *composition* is dependent entirely on the purely accidental position of the spectator, who happens to be in the right place at the right time. 2. The *colour* is dependent on the state of the spectator's sight, and on his previous training in the study of colour. 3. The *sentiment* attributed to the scene is operative only on a few cultivated minds. 4. The *changes* in natural effects, supposed to be pathetic or otherwise, go on equally whether a cultivated artist, an indifferent peasant, or an unobservant animal is the spectator. 5. If they were a divine message addressed to mankind such demonstrations would be most frequent near the centres of dense population, whereas the contrary is the case. Picture exhibitions occur in great capitals, whilst exhibitions of natural magnificence and sublimity are most frequent in the most desolate solitudes.

A scientific account of the effects of what we call beauty or sublimity in wild landscape would be that they result from unchangeable meteorological and optical laws, and that the sense of the beautiful or sublime which they sometimes excite in us is purely human, and limited to those human beings who have artistic or poetical perception.

However, these arguments, though I believe them to be unanswerable, do not affect the closeness of the analogy between the changeableness of human expression and that of natural landscape, as it is impossible for the artistic mind to look upon Nature as unemotional. As soon as we perceive that Nature is really unemotional (which she is) we cease to be painters and poets, and become men of science, at least in our conception of the universe, if not in the extent or exactness of our knowledge.

CHAPTER V

EVILS OF ELABORATION IN PORTRAITURE

IT is much to be regretted that in past times, before the discovery of the photographic processes, most people would have a finished portrait in oil or none at all. The value of slight and rapid sketches was very little appreciated, and the consequence was that thousands of people, still of some interest to their descendants, have left nothing but their names in pedigrees or on tombstones, when it would have been easy to employ for an hour some competent draughtsman with a lead pencil.

Etching was thoroughly understood two hundred years before the invention of photography. It afforded the most convenient means for multiplying copies of a portrait which might have been distributed amongst the friends of the person represented exactly as photographic positive prints are now. Ever since Rembrandt showed the way, there was no practical reason why whole families, from sons and brothers down to the most distant cousins, should not have possessed etched portraits of each other, but although they had this art with its power of almost unlimited multiplication at their disposal, they made no use of it, the idea of employing it seems to have no more occurred to them than book-printing to the ancient Romans. And the Romans were less negligent, in reality, than our forefathers, for they would have had to invent book-printing for themselves, whilst the art of printing etchings was already known, even in the sixteenth century, and all its subtleties had become familiar in the seventeenth. When Rembrandt etched a portrait for his amusement, some copies may have been given away, but it is likely that his etched portraits had very little sale; had they been a good commercial speculation he would have etched his own plain face less frequently. Even in our own day the etching of original portraits directly from nature has been very little practised. One or two eminent etchers have executed a few chiefly as a private amusement or experiment.

AN OLD MAN WITH A LARGE WHITE BEARD AND FUR CAP

ETCHING BY REMBRANDT

REPRODUCED IN HÉLIOGRAVURE BY AMAND-DURAND

UNFORTUNATELY this portrait (for it is evidently a portrait) is without a name, hence the long descriptive title, which is the one given by Mr. Middleton in his catalogue. The usual French title for the plate is "Vieillard au grand manteau de velours noir."

This is one of the best of Rembrandt's etchings in all ways, both in accuracy of drawing and quality of shade, texture, and local colour. Marvellous as these reproductions are I hope that the reader fully understands the kind of loss of quality that there always is, even in the best of them, when rigorously compared with the originals. In this case the original has still more refined quality in the shades.

Portrait-painters must always have been draughtsmen, yet how little the ability to draw, independently of painting, seems to have served its possessors or the world! It might have rendered the greatest services in preserving portraits of our forefathers, and just as Rembrandt had set in the most complete way the example of the etched portrait, so Holbein set the example of a serious kind of portraiture in drawing, which was at the same time accurate and careful without being costly, as the simplicity of the work made it economical of the artist's time. There is a typical instance in the famous pen-drawing by Holbein, in the Bâle Museum, which represents Sir Thomas More and his family in a group, and probably (from the care with which details of furniture are given) in More's own house. How infinitely precious and interesting this drawing is to us, yet it is a simple work in outline, that probably cost its author no more than a few hours, and how well occupied those hours were! What could the artist have done better than to give us this picture of a family then living in honourable peace, so soon to be tried by the sorest trouble, and to leave behind it an immortal fame, one of the purest in our history, bright with manly and womanly fortitude, and sweet with a perennial fragrance of the tenderest love and sorrow! And besides this most precious drawing, how many other drawings were made from life by Holbein which might have served as examples for a large and inexpensive production of portraits all over Europe!

In England the appreciation of etchings and drawings appears to have been limited to a very small class of connoisseurs. Even painters themselves have not usually cared much about etching, so that the etched portraits by Vandyke remained practically without effect as examples, and even in the present day a distinguished artist has lately told us that at a time when he was already successful with his painting, he had not yet taken the trouble to go to the British Museum and look at the etchings of Rembrandt. I myself have known successful painters who had no special interest in, or knowledge of, any kind of engraving whatever.

If our forefathers had encouraged sketching in the right way, that is frequent and unpretending sketching, we might have had most abundant and interesting graphic information about their lives, including their houses, furniture, animals, and everything that belonged to them, and it need not have cost them much money, whilst this simple kind of patronage would have helped many an anxious artist who found himself excluded from success as a painter because half a dozen celebrities at the head of his profession had all the really lucrative business of it to themselves.

The best example of what ought to have been done abundantly for

every generation since the invention of characteristic drawing, is the series of portraits of professors of the Edinburgh University, etched by Mr. Hole from sketches taken from nature, and published together on the occasion of the Tercentenary Festival under the title "Quasi Cursores."[1] The entire series is remarkable for the absence of the commonest vice in portrait of a more formal kind. Nobody poses, not one of the professors seems aware that he is being drawn. I do not mean to say that all the professors are destitute of self-consciousness in other ways, but it has no reference to anything like sitting for a portrait. A few seem to be aware that they are learned men, and to esteem it a privilege for the students to listen to them, but the majority are entirely absorbed in the matter of their lectures, so as to have forgotten everything outside of it. Character is much enhanced by such material adjuncts as the batteries and models of engines that surround the professor of engineering, the electrical machine which is explained by the professor of natural philosophy, or the skulls and brains on the table before the professor of anatomy. The last reminds me that all these professional portraits may be traced back to Rembrandt's Professor Tulp lecturing to his students, and that Rembrandt's picture, in its turn, was by no means alone, but belonged to quite a numerous family of works. However, those were finished pictures, and what I am arguing for now is the slight but characteristic sketch. Even in pictures themselves I do not hesitate to maintain that there is a great advantage in the absence of too laborious finish. For example, Reynolds was a very rapid painter who did not finish much, though he knew how to suggest all that was necessary with little labour. Had he been a very slow and careful painter, such as Clouet, he would have left very little behind him, instead of his wonderfully extensive and most interesting record of the manhood and ladyhood of England at a time when the aristocracy of rank and manners, and that of race in the sense of physical and mental superiority, were often most happily associated.

[1] Edinburgh: Printed at the University Press by T. & A. Constable, 1884.

CHAPTER VI

THE PORTRAITURE OF PRIDE

PORTRAITURE is alone amongst the Fine Arts in being, or perhaps I should rather say in having been, an instrument of government.

The art of government, as it has been understood in all ages that preceded the democratic, included the art of imposing upon the imagination by magnificence of costume, and also by reserving certain costumes for special functions, so that their peculiarity, instead of exciting ridicule, as it does when peculiarity of dress is the result of individual caprice, commanded the respect of all. The change in feeling with regard to external pomp is one of the most marked characteristics of the nineteenth century. The most conservative of all institutions, the Papacy, has preserved a special costume for its chief, just as he eats alone, and never travels, and in all things leads a most peculiar life, the peculiarity in his case being not originality or eccentricity, but the result of exaltation on an eminence of rank which claims to be above all earthly thrones. But with this single exception, no European potentate now wears a costume that pretends to be unique. All sovereigns of the male sex wear the uniform of some grade in their army. The French President has no ceremonial costume, a fact that I have noticed already elsewhere as a curious evidence of the inability of the quite modern mind to invent anything imposing. No modern nation of European stock, whether in Europe itself or transplanted to another hemisphere, could invent either a coronation dress or sacerdotal vestments, if such things were not already in existence. The dread of ridicule is the death of invention in these things.

The modern inability to devise costumes intended to be dignified may be taken as evidence that visible dignity has itself lost much of its former power as an instrument of government. We remember what importance Mr. Bagehot used to attach to it in England, and how he regarded the

ostentation of royalty, and even the expenditure of the peerage in dress and equipages, as an important means of subjugating the common people by disposing their minds to deferential sentiments. Mr. Bagehot's theory was that in England it is the business of royalty and aristocracy to be imposing and act upon the popular imagination, whilst the actual work of government was being done by others. The splendid classes made the people easy to govern; the working ministers governed them.

It is a curious proof of the connection that may sometimes subsist between politics and the fine arts that at the time when Mr. Bagehot's theory was most true as a description of a really existing condition of things, the state portrait flourished in its fullest perfection, and that with the gradual decline in the political influence of ostentation, and with the spread of democratic sentiments, the state portrait has gradually lost its magnificent pretensions, till in our own day it is scarcely distinguishable from portraiture of the ordinary kind. Its most complete perfection was reached in France during the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth, and as at that time the painters of French courtly life were seconded by some of the most skilful engravers who ever lived, their works were disseminated throughout Europe and imitated in other countries, as far as it was possible for less ostentatious races to imitate the incomparable self-glorification of the French. It was possible to copy their attitudes and costumes, but there is a grandeur of pride and vanity in the best French state portraiture of the great time which could be attained only in what was then the most successful of European nations. The pride of a distinguished Frenchman in those days was national, his vanity was individual, and the two together, aided by a strong tendency in the artist to display his own talent whilst glorifying his subject, led to such lofty heights of demeanour in the painted figure as must remain, for our meaner and simpler generation, an admirable but unattainable ideal. Can it ever have been possible, we ask ourselves, for mortal creatures to dwell in such absolute self-satisfaction? They seem to have no misgivings about anything they had to do. Their tranquil dignity never deserts them, even in the most exciting circumstances. There is a picture by an unknown artist representing Anne of Austria with Louis XIV. and Philip of Orleans as boys. The young king sits on a small throne in the royal mantle, *semé de fleurs de lis*, with the collar of the Holy Ghost on his ermine cape, his foot on a cushion, his crown on another cushion, the sceptre in his hand (gently supported by the royal mother, as if the boy could not bear the weight of it). Meanwhile a battle is going on in a field visible from the window, but the royal sitters do not stir to look at it. Why should they when the throne is fixed for ever in the eternal

order of things? Revolution was inconceivable in those days, and defeat the lot of the enemy.

It may, perhaps, be answered that the battle seen through the window, on the open space between the great curtain and the marble columns, was not supposed to be really near the boy who held the sceptre, but the same royal tranquillity belongs to princes on the field of battle itself. When "Ludovicus Delphinus, Ludovici Magni Filius," in other words, Prince Louis, son of Louis XIV., is represented within gunshot of a battle, he stands in a most dignified manner under a tree, in his wig, and mantle, and armour, with his marshal's baton in his hand, yet he seems to be ordering nothing, and to take no particular interest in the engagement; he is there merely to display his royal person to advantage. In those times the dignity of the *genre noble* in portraiture was by no means confined to royalty; it was ascribed to all classes of society that could supply subjects for the state portrait. It is curious, too, how the painters liked to join together qualities that seem to us incongruous. Everything is for display, and in that sense work itself is made a subject of ostentation; but it is never real work that absorbs the whole mind of a man, it is *acted* work, just like that of an actor on the stage who pretends to do a little painting or to be absorbed in accounts when every one can see plainly that he is not a real painter or a real accountant. The generals have usually some frippery that they would never wear on a field of battle, yet at the same time, as sons of Mars, they are too bellicose for a drawing-room. One of the best examples (amongst hundreds) of the grand military portrait is that of Louis Antoine de Pardaillan, Duke of Antin, and Lieutenant-General, painted by Hyacinthe Rigaud. It is an overpowering combination of peaceful and military splendours. The duke wears a huge wig, a mantle lined with ermine, fastened with a pearl brooch, and a lace collar, all which seem unsuitable for the battle-field. At the same time, however, he is in complete armour, and has his marshal's baton in his hand, and a mediæval helmet by his side, so that he is equally unfitted for the drawing-room. And the problem immediately suggests itself how the bulk of the bewigged head is to be packed into the helmet, and if the wig is to be taken off, why keep this hybrid costume in the picture? The artists of those days were never afraid of incongruity if by its help the sitter could be made to look more pompous. They even made themselves, in their pictures of artists, most inconveniently magnificent with voluminous folds of drapery, yet the sitter still holds a palette, and pretends to be at work, as if any human being could paint and be a lay figure to carry drapery at the same time. They had a habit of representing the sitter in what the French call an *encadrement*, that is a sort

of window without glass, usually elliptic in shape, and supposed to be a hole in a stone wall. The sitter conveniently happens to pause behind this opening and display himself to the greatest advantage. If he has a superabundance of drapery, it comes out through the hole like a cascade issuing from a grotto, and the artist arranges every fold of it so carefully that the drapery almost seems to be the subject of the picture. This is so in the portrait of Sebastian Bourdon by Rigaud, but it was a common arrangement, and I cannot say who originated it. Architects in their portraits did not look more workmanlike than painters. They were dressed to the utmost, and have nothing about them that concerns their trade except a plan, or a model, or a rule and compasses on a table. Drevet the architect sits magnificent with wig and star and immense embroidered sleeves displaying a lace cuff and a handsome hand that points to a roll of drawings. That was the way with the state portraiture of those times—ostentation in everything. What was the necessity for pointing to the drawings as if to say, "I am that great and eminent architect who executed them"?

The state portrait reached, perhaps, its highest perfection in the representation of ecclesiastical dignitaries. Enormous labour was bestowed on their rich costumes and their costly furniture, labour that strikes us most in the engravings, many of which are marvels of patient industry and skill. The conscientious toil that an engraver of the seventeenth or eighteenth century would bestow on the representation of the lace sleeves or skirt of a cardinal is in its way quite as astonishing as the detailed work of early masters in painting, and in one respect it is better, being more subordinated to the effect of the work as a whole. The engravings of Drevet, for example, resemble mediæval work in the loving care and deliberation with which the most intricate and abundant ornaments are followed in all their details, but it is far beyond mediæval work in the intelligence with which details are kept in their proper places. At first sight, indeed, we hardly perceive them more than we do in nature; it is only after some technical study of the work that we see them in their abundance. I am fully aware that this is not the most advanced of all possible conditions of the art of drawing, for it is neither mysterious nor suggestive, and it does not give the ocular impression so well as many a far slighter sketch by the greatest masters; still it is the most advanced kind of drawing which is compatible with the representation of minute detail, since the artist does not lose sight of the unity of the complete work. There is still something of mediæval sentiment left in the glorification of great men by the elaboration of ornament on their dress. Even in the days of Drevet and Edelinck it was felt that the smallest ornament on the sleeve of royalty, or of the higher clergy

and the noblesse, became important through the importance of the wearer. There is a portrait of Charles, Duke of Berry, painted by De Troy, and wonderfully engraved by Edelinck, in which the gold embroidery of the sleeve is finished in the minutest detail with an almost deceptive relief, whilst the soft richness of the white lace about the neck and wrists is imitated with a delicate sense of quality. There were three or four special exercises for the engraver's skill in those days—the great curling wig, the velvet coat with its gold embroidery, the lace about neck and wrists, and often a cuirass or other armour. When these accoutrements are deducted by an effort of imagination, little remains but an expression of self-importance that could not be so consistently maintained without them. And as the splendours of the mediæval knight had been accompanied by those of the mediæval bishop, so those of the courtiers at Versailles were accompanied by the rather feminine silk and lace of a wealthy and worldly episcopate. In the fine portrait of Cardinal de Fleury, engraved by Drevet, the artist followed the usual precedent of making all accessories very sumptuous, as in the elaborate finish of the arm-chair and the writing-table, more valuable than convenient, the importance of the personage being enhanced by representing the conventional curtain in a sort of flourish above his head, as if caught in a gust of wind, whilst he sits dignified and serene. The ecclesiastical state portrait survives even in our own day, but it has no longer the wonderful blending of the two distinctions, aristocratic and clerical, that marked the Princes of the Church under Louis XIV. and Louis XV. The finest of all modern ecclesiastical portraits that I remember is one of the latest works of Élie Delaunay representing Cardinal Bernadou, Archbishop of Sens. Technically, it was a wonderful study of various kinds and qualities of red, harmonised with great courage and great art, but we are not just at present occupied with colour. What is more to our present purpose is that the portrait had much less worldliness than those of the *grand siècle*. Its perfectly serious temper took us back, in spirit at least, rather to the Middle Ages than to the Renascence. Perhaps both prelate and painter gained additional gravity from the presentiment of approaching death, for before the expiration of the year in which the picture was exhibited an episcopal funeral service was held in the Cathedral of Sens, and artistic Paris followed Delaunay to his grave.

The latest of all great ecclesiastical state portraits (down to the writing of the present chapter) is that of Pope Leo XIII. by Chartran. Even in this work, however, the modern tendency to simplification and to the rejection of pomp and ceremony is very visible. The state costume of a "Supreme Pontiff" is as stiff and cumbersome as it is splendid; the head

becomes insignificant under the lofty tiara, and the body is hidden beneath an almost conical cope. M. Chartran avoided the Papal regalia, and represented the Pope as seated, it is true, on a kind of throne, but in the white dress he usually wears when giving audience. The expression of the face was not at all that of pride or even of solemnity, but rather of intense acuteness, lively attention to his visitor, and a sort of smiling amiability that has an appearance of extreme optimism notwithstanding fifteen years of voluntary imprisonment in the Vatican. In a word, it is the human and personal character of a remarkable man that is represented, and not the overpowering dignity of an office that claims to be the most dignified on earth. Yet Leo XIII. was himself so much satisfied with this portrait that he wrote Latin verses in which he compared the painter to Apelles, and afterwards made him commander of a Papal order of knighthood.

The true state portrait has declined so much in the present century that, like the state coaches of royal processions, it becomes less and less majestic in every decade. Nevertheless, the nineteenth century does possess one state portrait of supreme historical interest which is an absolutely complete and typical example of this class of art, and has never been surpassed in other ages, I do not say as a painting, but as an example of human ostentation. This is the portrait of Napoleon I. in his coronation robes, painted by Gérard, and engraved with great perfection by Auguste Desnoyers. On the day of his coronation, before assuming the imperial crown, Napoleon had worn a wreath of golden laurel to suggest a comparison with Cæsar, and the painter judiciously preserved this, placing the imperial crown on a cushion. As for the sceptre, the Emperor holds it in his hand. He wears a long white silk dalmatic, embroidered with gold, and white shoes also delicately embroidered. On his shoulders is the great imperial mantle of red velvet, powdered with golden bees and lined with ermine, and over the ermine cape is the collar of the Legion of Honour.

These vestments appear out of keeping with so active a life as that of Napoleon, and it seems to us that he was more himself in boots and breeches and the old familiar gray overcoat, but he became the vestments well, except for his short stature, as his handsome face had pride enough in in it for any pomp of sovereignty, and these adornments were but for an hour, the supreme hour of an existence so dazzling that no degree of splendour could, at that time, be really excessive or inappropriate. There may exist in Russia some state portrait of the Czar as he stood crowned and robed in the Kremlin, and that may be materially more elaborate in wealth of barbaric ornament, but it is doubtful whether any imperial crown,

however heavy with precious stones, would look prouder than the golden laurel on the most military head of modern times.

The political uses of the state portrait now belong almost exclusively to the past. To have its due effect on the minds of the people, the state portrait should hang in their cottages, in brilliant colours, and almost alone, that is, there ought not to be any familiar and simply human portrait of the personage by the side of it, only ideal representations of Holy Families and the Saints. The dissemination of commonplace portraiture by photography and illustrated periodicals is, in our day, fatal to this kind of exaltation. Everybody sees the most illustrious personages in Europe in familiar groups, and dressed like men and women of the middle class. This is rapidly leading us to a certain kind of visible equality that must ultimately put an end to all the arts of pomp and pride. Even already it has become impossible for the Head of the State in France to wear on any occasion whatever the collar that belongs to him as Grand Master of the Legion of Honour. It is too splendid to go with ordinary civilian dress, and the President has no state robes. When Queen Victoria still on rare occasions continued to open Parliament her robes were worn no longer but laid upon the throne. The only sovereign in Europe who has ever sat at table in complete regal state, that is, with his crown upon his head, is the autocrat of the most backward empire. A more certain proof of the steady modern tendency to abolish visible state is that whenever it has been abandoned, or even diminished, no restoration of it is possible. It is authorised only by the past, and depends wholly upon the continuity of tradition. And the most remarkable fact in this weakening of primitive instincts is that the desire for state has lost its force in those who might profit by it most. The personages whose function it is to discharge the ostentatious duties of government become less imposing and less decorative than the public would like them to be. "Semi-state" is substituted for full state, and a private style without pretension is preferred to either. The tendency is, if not to Republican equality in appearances, at least towards a royalty like that of the last King of the Netherlands, who was more in character in a suit of gray tweed with a round hat than he could ever have been with "a crimson mantle and a golden crown of pride."

CHAPTER VII

PORTRAITURE WITHOUT PRETENSION

EVERY kind of art has its own dangers. If portraiture is not to glorify its hero, it must accept him simply for what he is, both in bearing and in dress. This seems at first sight to take away all possibility of idealisation, and so to bring portraiture down to the barest matter of fact. There is, however, still ample room for learning and discernment, and for a certain exercise of taste, as we may see by the numerous examples in which these qualities have *not* been exercised, and yet might have been without unfaithfulness to the sitter or injury to the veracity of the work.

The motive of the most serious modern portraiture is the desire for simplicity and fidelity. The sitter poses, of course, but he must not seem to pose; he must not be represented in some costume that he wears on rare occasions, but in his every-day dress, the dress that he works in, or that he wears when idling in his own garden, not his scarlet robes as a D.C.L. His attitude may express thought and reflection, but not any vain preoccupation about the opinion of others. If he is at work, he must be really absorbed in what he has to do, not affecting to be at work, as in the portraits of the eighteenth century, where the painter pretends to be painting, the architect to be occupied about his plans, the soldier about the movements of troops or the defence of cities, yet all alike are thinking of one subject only—the appearance of *self* upon the canvas.

The modern tendency to simplicity and sincerity in portraiture is not in itself a novelty, for it governed, within certain limits, much of the work done before the Renascence. It is a return to principles that had been unconsciously followed in earlier art; but there is a vital difference between the unconscious following of principles and the deliberate acceptance of them as a result of criticism. Artists are willing to have it understood that the critical spirit of modern times belongs to another class than their own—to a writing class remarkable chiefly for its technical and practical ignorance.

In fact, however, the whole of modern art is founded upon the modern criticism of the past, and this criticism is as prevalent amongst artists themselves as amongst writers who, with reference to professional work in the fine arts, are looked upon as a laity. Modern simplicity in portrait and other varieties of art is like modern simplicity of manners, a consequence of long experience and perfectly conscious reflection. It is as remote as possible from the kind of innocence that is called *naïveté*. It comes from the knowledge that the imposing no longer imposes, and that all the devices of artificial grandeur are no longer effective, because they are seen through in an age too acute to be deferential. Artists cannot preserve a pristine innocence of mind in the midst of a society like ours, a society without an illusion left, and that is in all things "knowing" to a fault. Artists are not a learned class, but they are keenly intelligent and observant, and they perceive, by the mere fineness and delicacy of instinct, the uselessness of devices that were formerly successful. It is not that pretension no longer exists in our society; it exists still in other and less obvious forms, so that the study of it is now rather the business of the novelist than of the painter. In costume it seems to us ridiculous, and therefore does not subjugate our minds; it is still effectual in the invisible clothing of intellect and sentiment, in the hypocrisies of culture and religion.

The external simplicity of modern life affects chiefly the portraiture of men, as the costumes of women still supply a sufficient variety of rich materials for the use of painters who care to amuse themselves and the public by dexterous imitations of colour and texture. Women have still their silks and satins, their feathers and down, their laces and embroideries, their rich and heavy velvets, their light and transparent tulle. A rich woman may be truthfully represented in such a manner that without pretending to be anything more than simply a rich woman she shall have almost the magnificence and something like the majesty of a queen. With a little art in arrangement her gilded chair becomes a sort of throne, the jewels in her hair a crown, and her train of crimson velvet a royal mantle. And in all this splendour there is no more than a true account of the sovereignty that women exercise by the powers of beauty and wealth. The two powers of the male sex are intellect and money, and neither of the two in their case can make itself visible in dress. Intellect was never visible in that way; wealth made itself visible in the rich costumes of our semi-barbarous ancestors, but a wind of equality has passed over the masculine world and blown all those splendours away.

The loss of costume would in itself have been a very unimportant loss for portraiture if the bust had been left simply naked, or draped like those

of Roman antiquity, but the change was not from magnificence to simplicity only, it was from magnificence to the stiffness and ugliness of modern tailoring. The tall collars of the earlier part of the nineteenth century entirely concealed the beauty and strength of the neck, the shoulders were made to appear higher and narrower than in nature, and the darkness of black or blue cloth with the strong contrast of the white linen in the shirt-collar made it difficult to avoid or mitigate what the artist must often have found to be unwelcome and embarrassing oppositions. There are thousands of nineteenth-century portraits in which the face is so completely isolated from the dark background and black coat as to appear more like a plate on a sideboard than a part of the human body; in fact, the portrait-painters became so accustomed to thinking of the face as distinct from the body that they often lighted it strongly, whilst the chest and shoulders were left in comparative darkness. And it has unfortunately happened that the only costumes that show the chest and shoulders well, without separating them unnecessarily from the face, are those of our modern athletes—our rowers, cricketers, and bicyclists—who are generally young men; whilst these costumes have the disadvantage, in every case, of awakening associations, which, however agreeable and invigorating to the body, have no connection with the toils and triumphs of the mind. I am thinking at this moment of the portrait of John Stuart Mill by Mr. Watts—a fine work so far as intellectual character is concerned, for the face is serious and thoughtful, without any trace of vanity, and the subject no more poses as a philosopher than he poses as an officer in the army; but whatever may be the merits of the face on its own account, it is there entirely by itself, and sufficiently lighted to be well seen, whereas the body is hidden in a black coat and waistcoat, lightless, and, in Rajon's etching at least, scarcely distinguishable from the background. The reader may observe in the portrait of Lord Lawrence, by the same artist, that whilst the face is full of carefully studied modelling, the chest and shoulders are almost without form on account of the tailoring; but here, at least, that part of the body is separated from the background by its value as a darker mass. The too great isolation of the face, which in painting results from the coat and waistcoat and the inconveniently excessive contrast between white linen and black cloth, may be obviated by clothing the subject in gray, yet not in all cases, as some men never wear gray, whilst all wear black on occasions of ceremony, and black is connected with ideas of gravity and learning that cannot in all cases be abandoned. Sometimes the habits of a man leave no choice whatever as to costume. When the sitter always dresses in the same way the painter can only follow it; as, for instance, when he

LORD LAWRENCE

PAINTED BY G. F. WATTS, R.A.

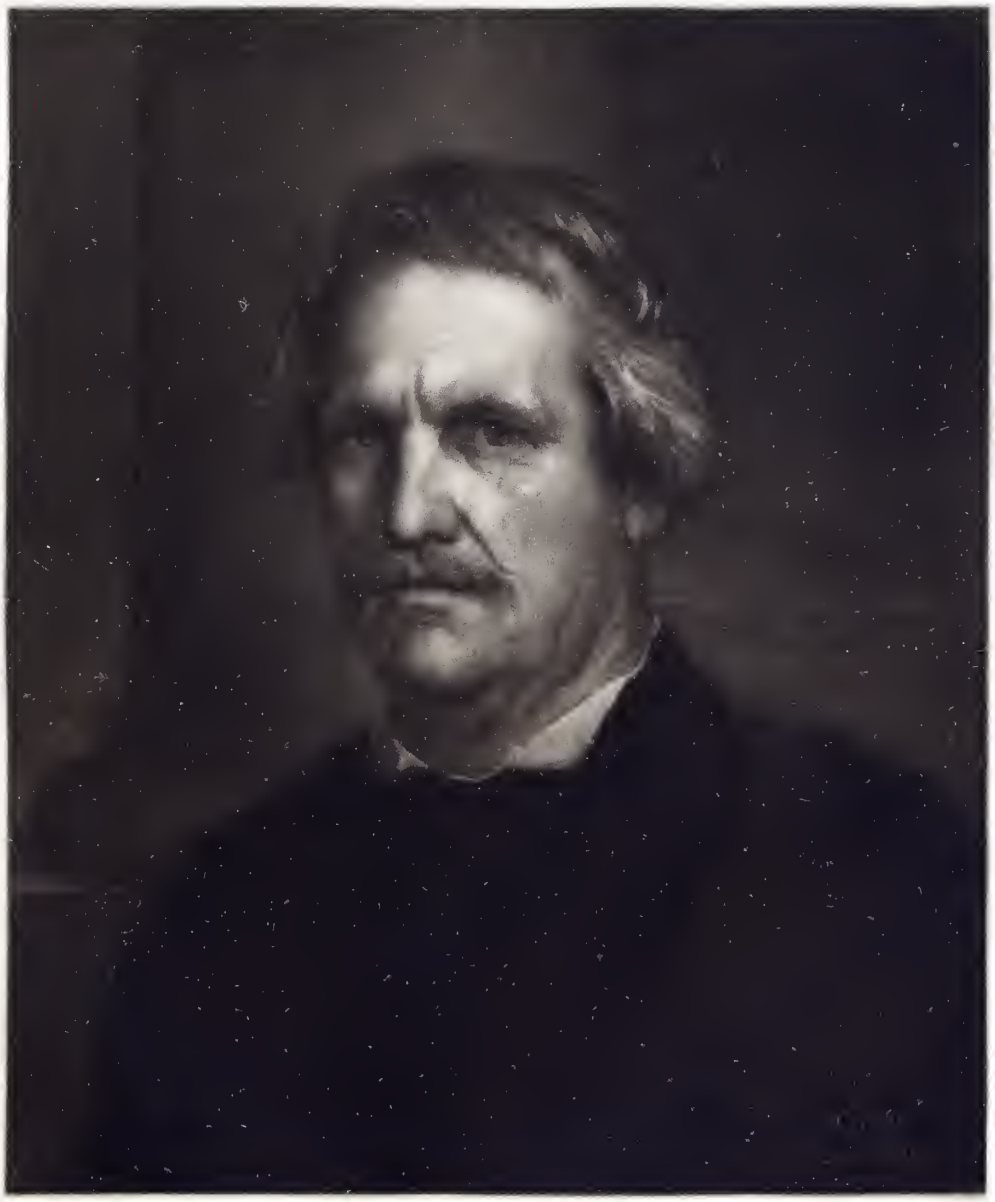
ENGRAVED IN MEZZOTINT BY NORMAN HIRST

ONE of Mr. Watts's series of portraits of illustrious Englishmen, chosen for this work as an example of visible power, both mental and physical.

It is interesting to compare the simplicity of this portrait with the accumulation of the paraphernalia of rank and authority that would have accompanied such a personage in the eighteenth century. In a yet earlier stage of the history of art Lord Lawrence would have been put into an allegorical picture along with figures representing Mutiny quelled and Ignorance vanquished.

The introduction of the familiar conventional column may have a reason in this case, as it suggests the palatial edifices temporarily inhabited by a Governor-General.

Mr. Norman Hirst, the engraver, was one of Mr. Herkomer's pupils, and so belongs to the English Renascence of mezzotint-engraving.



represents a member of a monastic order. And even when sameness of dress is not an obligation, it is sometimes adopted by very regular and methodical people merely to settle the question by a fixed rule. For example, Auguste Comte, the philosopher, was extremely punctual and methodical, and his dress is described as follows by one of his pupils: "He was invariably dressed in a suit of the most spotless black, as if going to a dinner-party; his white neckcloth was fresh from the laundress's hands, and his hat shining like a racer's coat." In sculpture the difficulty about colour has no existence, and if it were what it is in painting, the sculptor has a way of escape. He may, if he likes, represent the chest and shoulders as naked, which painters never do in portraits, though I am not aware that there would be any indecency in painting those parts of the body. The effect of that degree of nudity in portrait may be clearly seen by an illustration in this volume, the "Silenus," by M. Gusman. The reader will at once perceive how admirably in this instance the nudity of the body accompanies the nudity of the face, and how completely it prevents the face from being isolated. Besides this, the light tones of the flesh have permitted the artist to get sufficient contrast whilst keeping his background pale, and this is very favourable to a quiet harmony of tones all over the work which, to my feeling at least, is much pleasanter and more satisfactory than a patch of light in the midst of surrounding darkness.

I have alluded to one of the facilities of sculpture in its avoidance of colour, yet, on the whole, the sculptor is more to be pitied than the painter whilst he contends against the difficulties of modern costume. Modern portraiture in sculpture does well to confine itself chiefly to the bust and the medallion, as in the complete statue what is to be done with a coat and trousers? The theory that art should always be able to assimilate everything to itself because in the past it has assimilated, not everything, but many things, is too dangerous to be implicitly relied upon. Bad costume is always a great difficulty, even in the hands of artists who are too experienced and too wary to fall into any obvious snare. Sculptors try what can be done with it in repeated experiments, the very difficulty itself being a stimulus and an incitement, but their perseverance has never yet been rewarded as it deserved. They are fighting against conditions foreign to the true nature of their art. We think our great-grandfathers were ridiculous because they set up statues of contemporary generals in the accoutrements of Roman emperors. They were driven to this anachronism as much by artistic needs as by a fashion of interest in antiquity. It seemed to them that they had found a satisfactory solution of a difficulty

that still torments us. We cannot accept their solution; it does not seem satisfactory to us. We are too critical for any obvious anachronism; we desire the truth, and the truth is often incompatible with fine art.

Whilst reflecting on the subject of this chapter I happened to have business in a quarter of Paris where statues are now becoming rather numerous,—I mean the region near the School of Medicine and the Collège de France—and so I examined them all again with special reference to the possibility of tolerating modern dress. There is a colossal bronze statue of Claude Bernard just in front of the Collège de France. He stands by a little piece of laboratory furniture, on which lies a poor dog, bound for vivisection, and the anatomist has one hand upon the animal, whilst he is meditating upon or professing some scientific doctrine. He is dressed in a frock-coat, with waistcoat and trousers. Could that be his working dress as a practical anatomist? However this may be, the sculptor's object was to give him an air of dignity and respectability, and for this purpose a frock-coat is better than an apron and shirt-sleeves. But a coat in bronze is not the same thing as a coat in broadcloth; it has not the same gravity of colour and softness of texture; it does not look either so respectable or so comfortable. (I need hardly remind the reader that the notion of a metallic dress was employed by Dante to convey the sense of a discomfort amounting to torture.) From the plastic point of view the effect of a bronze coat is deplorable, especially when seen from behind, where the huge back and skirts have no more grace or beauty than the hinder parts of an elephant. Exactly the same dress is employed in the statue of Paul Broca near the School of Medicine, and without any better result. Within the courtyard of the same school there is a bronze statue of the anatomist Bichat, ridiculous, yet more interesting than the others. His costume is that of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, his poor, thin legs encased in tight breeches and tall creased boots. According to the fashion of those days, his tail-coat seems too small for him, and to avoid the laughable effect of a back view, the image is placed between two pillars near the wall of the courtyard with its face towards the entrance. It is an odd reflection to think that this statue was never intended to be comical, that it was set up with the gravest intentions to commemorate an illustrious man of science, and that it amuses us now for no better reason than a change in the fashion of dress. We think that the coat is too small and the boots too important because our ideas of proportion in these things have been formed by more recent customs; but with all the force of ridicule against it this old-fashioned statue is even yet more sculpturesque than the Bernard or the Broca, or than the statue of Aristide Boucicaut, the great shop-keeper, who was also

represented in frock-coat and trousers, as became a wealthy bourgeois of Paris. Having enough of these nineteenth-century attempts at tailoring in bronze, we can go back to the eighteenth in the furious figure of Danton, and here the dress does much better because it abounds in picturesque incidents and varieties of line that amuse the eye from every point of view. The variety is increased by the two half-dressed enthusiastic youths who complete the group as they listen to Danton's stirring appeal. They, too, do well in bronze, though beggarly as street children by Murillo. The group does not belong to the highest class of portrait-sculpture; it is too picturesque for that and too restless and energetic, whilst the statue of Claude Bernard is really sculpturesque in conception; but the Danton is satisfactory because the costume permitted the peculiar kind of excellence that the artist had in view. He could have done nothing with such a subject if Danton had dressed like M. Aristide Boucicaut. Further westwards we meet with the sitting statue of Diderot, of course in eighteenth-century costume, and although this has not the wild variety of the Danton, the dress is favourable to the attitude, which is that of thoughtful repose. There is some physical beauty, too, in the manly forms of the body which the dress of Diderot's time left visible, especially in the legs, and in this statue the body even gains a certain grace and elegance from the well-chosen curves and folds of the coat.

Following the same street towards the east, we come to the Place Maubert, and there we meet with a costume still more remote from our own unfortunate fashions. The statue of Étienne Dolet, the printer, now stands on its pedestal exactly on the spot where he was burnt for his heretical opinions. His manly figure shows to great advantage in the picturesque costume of his time. Here are two favourable elements—form, that is beauty of line, and the picturesque, that is interesting and unexpected variety of line. The legs, being in close-fitting hose, are very nearly as pure in line as in a statue of the nude; they satisfy the sense of form as a naked statue satisfies it, and therefore they are exactly adapted to sculpture from the classical point of view. That part of the costume that we call picturesque begins at the upper part of the thighs with the puffed hose, and thence it continues to the chin; but the short jerkin, fitting closely, shows the form, both of chest and arms, better than any modern coat. Dolet is a goodly man to look upon, and as the costume sets off his handsome figure to advantage, we regret the more that it was given whilst living to the flames. This is the feeling that the Municipal Council of Paris wished to inspire in us, for it leads directly to indignation against the priesthood that procured his condemnation to torture and the stake.

In all these statues that I have just alluded to with reference to costume the absence of false pretension is equally notable. The reader will observe that although the costumes are very different, they are in each instance exactly faithful to the fashions of the time, and not one of the statues *poses* for anything beyond the real nature and attributes of the man. It is true that Danton is very violent and energetic, but even here there is not any exaggeration. Danton had a coarse and rude nature, full of ebullient energy, and the greatest power that he exercised over other men was by animating them with his own ardour. It was not more the sculptor's business to polish and civilise Danton than to give him a handsome face instead of an ugly one. The subjects of the other statues are more quiescent, either in thought like Diderot, or in a calmly didactic attitude like that of Claude Bernard or Broca. In connection with these I may mention the statue of John Mill on the Thames Embankment, also quite simple and natural, and in a great measure spoiled as a work of art by the truthfulness of the sculptor in adopting the modern dress. As we have already seen, the painted portrait by Mr. Watts avoided this difficulty by almost entirely losing the costume in mere darkness along with a dark background, but this way of escape is beyond the reach of the sculptor, whose entire work is exposed to the same broad daylight. It is interesting to observe how the difficulty of modern costume has been overcome in the two equally truthful and equally unpretending portraits of Darwin by Mr. Ouless and Mr. John Collier. In that by Mr. Ouless (etched with marvellous skill and power by Rajon) the coat is a morning jacket, which is better in texture and colour than the frock-coat, and in the portrait by Mr. Collier (admirably etched by Flameng) the naturalist wears a long cloak, with the left hand partially visible, and carrying a soft felt hat. In both works there is no attempt to beautify the face, which would always have been interesting even if the name of the subject had never become illustrious. Few modern portraits have been so satisfactory as these two, as there is no fuss or untruth in them whatever, either by increasing personal beauty or by any kind of ostentation. The reader has only to compare such portraits as these with those made in France under the magnificent monarchs to see how far the plain rationalism of the present age has carried us in the direction of simplicity and veracity. Even in France a great painter and engraver has not shrunk in our time from the most unflattering frankness in the case of an eminent prelate who would have been glorified in all ways in the time of Louis XV. The portrait of Monseigneur de Ségur, by Ferdinand Gaillard, is a carefully minute study of one of the plainest faces that ever were, a strikingly irregular face, as the whole left side was bigger

than the right, and the two bushy eyebrows were as unlike each other as two things could be that had to make a sort of pair, the right being at its thinnest near the nose and the left at its thickest, finishing with a peculiar upward twirl and then a sudden descent towards the ear. The natural irregularity of the face had been increased by the accidental loss of one eye, and both eyelids were wrinkled and heavy and drooped too much, but in unequal degrees. The nose and upper lip were massive and protuberant, and all the face strongly modelled into bosses and hollows like a rugged mountain-side. On the top of the cranium was a short, stiff crop of stubbly hair. Gaillard set himself to study all the details of this curious natural object as an astronomer studies the protuberances of the moon. With the help of a dignified but not in any way brilliant or sumptuous ecclesiastical costume, he succeeded in producing an impression both of stateliness and power.

The desire to excel in portraiture by sheer strength of representation and without the help of flattery and splendour of accompaniments is very characteristic of our time. I should be sorry to pass without mention Sir Frederick Leighton's noble portrait of Sir Richard Burton, that superb specimen of English manhood, in whom were joined together the most astonishing physical and mental powers, all raised to the highest pitch by training, and maintained by an activity that left no place for the rust of indolence. The strength of that portrait was the more remarkable that the painter had usually been more drawn to what was graceful and beautiful, especially in the other sex. Another of the strong and simply-painted portraits that are likely to remain historical is that of Mr. Gladstone by Sir John Millais—I mean the one in the plain dress, to which no official costume could have added anything. Some readers think perhaps that Mr. Gladstone is a bad man, and others that he is a good man, but whatever may be the difference of opinion about the adjective, the substantive, at least, is beyond dispute. And notwithstanding the superior grace and charm of ladyhood to which so many painters have paid the homage of much study and not a little flattery, it still seems that the best subject for the most simple kind of portraiture is a man. His years are of little consequence if there is the expression of power. I think I never saw that expression more perfectly given than in the portrait of Lord Lawrence by Mr. Watts. This is the man who ruled India when the great Mutiny broke out, and who, with the help of other brave men, saved it. Truly, this portrait of him is "*Man* in *Art*" in the most complete sense of both words.

I have indicated in this chapter some of the difficulties of modern costume in sculpture and painting, and may now add in this place what

might have been said in the chapter on the Evils of Elaboration in Portraiture, that these difficulties are always least felt in the slightest kinds of art, which is another very strong reason in their favour. All those forms of art which allow paper to be left blank in large spaces are convenient in sparing the necessity for a too rigorous attention either to the form of costume or its colour. If the costume is too prim and neat, it may be sketched with an intentional appearance of looseness and almost carelessness of line, and if one hard outline seems too definite, it may be replaced by a play of several seemingly tentative or experimental lines, out of which the eye of the spectator is left to make its own selection. But the great advantage in sketching on paper is that it delivers us so completely from the tyranny of local colour. The black coat or cravat may quite legitimately be left gray or even white if the artist finds it more convenient. This was frequently done by Ingres in those admirable portraits in lead pencil that he used to execute for twenty or thirty francs apiece in the days of his obscurity; and it was done by Leslie in the beautiful portrait of Constable that was lithographed for Leslie's biography of him. In that work the coat and stock (probably of black cloth and black silk or satin) are judiciously kept much paler than in nature, so as not to assert themselves with a degree of force that would be out of harmony with the delicacy of the face.

The nearest approach to this kind of treatment possible in oil-painting is to leave the work intentionally unfinished, which affords an excuse for a light and superficial treatment of everything but the face. I observe as one result of modern sketching that a few artists have attempted to vignette portraits in oil, a practice not likely to become general, as it is not very suitable to the medium, but it is easy in water-colour, and affords a way out of many embarrassments.

CHAPTER VIII

IMAGINARY PORTRAITS

ONE of the most interesting characteristics of the human mind is the pleasure that it has in pure make-believe, in self-deception of which it still remains perfectly conscious. An artist paints or carves a portrait of somebody that he never saw, and concerning whose person he possesses no documents whatever, the chances are millions to one that there is not the slightest trace of resemblance to the supposed original, yet we look upon the work with quite genuine satisfaction if only it answers in some degree to our notion of what the original might possibly have been like. Novelists and playwrights have occasionally turned into ridicule the propensity of a few self-made men to invent ancestors for themselves, and to have imaginary portraits of them on their walls. If ever this has been done in real life for the satisfaction of an individual, he only followed a precedent set for him by humanity at large. Unable to rest content with what is really known about the past, we encourage the painter or the sculptor to travel beyond the confines of the known and bring back for us rich spoils out of the abyss of emptiness. He is to go, like Lord Bacon, and rediscover the lost Atlantis.

The most remarkable of our inconsistencies in the love of imaginary portraits is that we accept them when contradictory of each other. We accept a King Alfred from the invention of one artist, and another King Alfred from another artist, the two being entirely incompatible, yet we have a kind of satisfaction in both. Our mind accommodates and adjusts itself to different inventions as it does to different effects of light in landscape.

If we are descended from some historical personage of whom there is no authentic portrait, and if some painter or sculptor makes an imaginary portrait of him, we are drawn to it by an irrational but irresistible curiosity. We know that it is only the portrait of some model, more or less idealised, yet the mere choice of the name (which may have been decided upon at the last moment after the work was done) is enough of itself to act upon our

ówn sympathy and imagination. It was perfectly natural, perfectly in accordance with this human instinct, that the Duke of Westminster should have set up a colossal statue of his ancestor Hugh Lupus in the grounds of Eaton Hall. Nobody knows what Hugh Lupus was like, but Mr. Watts, with his gift of imagination, is supposed to know, and reveals him to us stalwart in his armour of bronze. Our pedigrees are often mere catalogues of names; they would be more real for us if an artist enriched them with miniatures or medallions throughout the ages. Thackeray touched playfully upon this desire to realise what can never be made visible when he described young Clive Newcome as drawing ideal sketches of his reputed ancestor the "barber-surgeon."

It is a vast advantage for ideal portraiture that we should not possess any record of the reality. When Rubens made his portraits of the Magi he was free to choose the most majestic models. If the Church had possessed photographs of her prophets and apostles, Michael Angelo would have been so hampered by them, and by the priestly desire for a reverent fidelity, that his imaginative production of sublime personages would have been made impossible. It is curious, but indisputable, that we owe the overpowering Moses of Michael Angelo and his awful prophets and his stately and authoritative apostles and evangelists not to his great imaginative genius merely, but to the universal ignorance about the real men which left his genius free to do its best. This is but one of the many artistic advantages that we owe to our ignorance of the past, for if we knew it familiarly as we do the England of the newspaper age, it would be difficult indeed for any public man, however strong in intellect and pure in character, to preserve that ideal grandeur which the genius of Michael Angelo realised.

There is an interesting example in art-history of a kind of portraiture which is not entirely fictitious, as the artist had access to materials, but which, nevertheless, is in a certain degree fictitious, as the materials were inadequate for paintings in which the artist affected to know more than had come down to him. When Titian undertook the portraits of the Twelve Cæsars for Federico Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, he could refer to many statues, busts, and medals or gems; but a little reflection soon makes us perceive how far these materials are from supplying the *life* in the eyes and complexion, in the colour of the hair, and in the qualities of the living tissues that interest a painter, and most especially a colourist. The commission for this series was a strange and not altogether a prudent commission to give. The impulse that prompted it was the common desire to know more about the past than can ever now be ascertained, along with a semi-belief that Titian could somehow gain access to it and reveal it.

THESEUS

GREEK MARBLE

HYALOGRAPH DRAWN BY G. DE ROTON

(*Louvre*)

THE bust is called "Theseus," but the true title is unknown. It is believed to belong to the age of Pericles.

The head is a good example of what the Greeks understood by the beauty of beardless man, and, although idealised, is not without individuality. At the same time, if Theseus is really the personage intended, the bust is open to the criticism that it does not exhibit any particular tendency to heroic human action, but has rather the calm of some divinity. It is true that Theseus received divine honours after his death.

IMP. CHARDON-WITTMANN PARIS

A nearer approach to this kind of truth might be possible for artists if they were aided, as they have been in some cases, by the light thrown on slender artistic materials by literary description, but this would lead us away from imaginary portraiture to historical. However, the imagination of a portrait-painter may sometimes find vigorous exercise in the endeavour to realise a face that the artist has never seen, but for which he has some slight memoranda. In such a case the kind of imagination exercised appears to be purely scientific and reconstructive within the limits of positive consistency and truth. Portraiture of this kind, applying known laws to the reconstruction of a human face, and to the bestowal of new life, is far from being an idle employment of a painter's knowledge and ability.

Here is a case in which the imagination may be employed in the revival of the past. A contemporary portrait exists, but although it answers almost every question we might ask about the physical appearance of an ancestor who lived, let us say, in the time of Queen Elizabeth—although it tells us plainly what was the shape of his face, the colour of his hair and complexion and of his eyes, the trimming of his beard and the fashion of his dress—still, the work is stiff and hard, it is insufficiently modelled, and even the dress itself is without quality and texture as a piece of painting, though nothing could be clearer and more explicit as a mere piece of information *about* the costume our ancestor wore. In a case of this kind a modern artist might be called in, not to touch upon the old painting, which, however poor, is sacred, but to realise it over again, on another canvas, with the help of his greater technical accomplishment and his better knowledge of the life. Here the exercise of imagination would simply be in imparting vitality to the face and reality to the costume. By a process resembling in some degree the transfusion of living blood, the artist would take a certain quantity of life out of his own century (this *present*, in which life is super-abundant) and carry it back to the Elizabethan age that life has quitted long ago. Such a process is so common in modern literature that it has ceased to attract attention. The modern biographer of a man who lived in the distant past brings to his task a knowledge of life acquired from his observation of the living, and he is more exposed to anachronism than a painter, as there is clear evidence that the minds of men have changed more than their bodies.

CHAPTER IX

THE BODY IN PORTRAIT

IN a previous chapter—that on "Painting and Carving the Soul"—I have shown how limited is the power of the plastic and graphic arts in the representation of mind, but as we all believe ourselves to have the science of Lavater, we calmly judge of people's minds by their faces, or by the little that we are able to discover in them, and we attach very little importance to the rest of their bodies, which seems to us almost superfluous in a portrait. If in real life we catch a glimpse of a face at a carriage window, we feel that we have seen the man, whereas if we have had ample opportunities of seeing a masked harlequin at a ball, though every limb is as clearly visible, as to form at least, as if he were naked, it does not appear to us that we have seen the man at all, but only a sort of automaton that imitates human movements. The comparative rarity of full-length portraits may be explicable by a feeling that has come down to us from Christian and mediæval sentiment *that the body is not the man.* According to that sentiment the body is a habitation—an imperfect and temporary habitation—that the real man should be prepared to leave without regret. The Church has always concealed the body as much as possible, whether under rich and splendid vestments or a plain monastic dress. The classical idea of costume was the human figure more or less draped; the mediæval idea was the human figure hidden in armour, vestments, or robes. The mediæval tendency to the concealment of physical forms was shown even in the ample housings thrown over horses for state occasions, and which hid the forms of the animals almost completely.[1]

This tendency to hide the body might have pas ed away earlier had it

[1] To this it might be objected that the every-day mediæval dress for pages and other active persons (jerkin and long hose) showed at least the forms of the legs and chest. So it did, as activity required a certain freedom, but the dignified nobles and burgesses delighted in the amplitude of great mantles and robes, and the ladies in long petticoats.

A MONK WRITING AT A DESK OR LECTERN

Terra-cotta Panel

Ascribed to Luca della Robbia

Hyalograph drawn by T. E. Macklin

The date of this panel is believed to be about 1450.

The subject has often been treated in designs from the Middle Ages downwards. It is simply the scribe writing quietly, and it has been repeated in Holbein's portrait of Erasmus and many modern pictures.

It is admirably adapted to the purposes of art, both graphic and plastic, as the scribe is a quiet personage, who may be supposed to go on for hours in an occupation requiring such slight movements that they are almost equivalent to immobility. In his times of reflection he may, indeed, remain perfectly still. In ages when the art of writing was a rare accomplishment the scribe was a person of exceptional culture, and this gave him a certain dignity, since lost by the spread of education. This dignity is preserved in the work before us.

IMP. CHAMDON-WITTMANN PARIS

not been reinforced by Puritan ideas of modesty and morality. These ideas were a revival rather than a novelty, for they had already caused the destruction of great numbers of antique statues by the early Christian iconoclasts, and for religious rather than moral reasons they had prevented the study of the human body in the countries under the faith of Islam. They arose again in England through the desire for assimilation with the ancient Jews, which was fashionable amongst the Puritans of the seventeenth century. One of the conditions of resemblance to the ancient Jews was to have no art that was founded upon the study of the body, and this degree of resemblance was very easily attained, as it required nothing but simple abstinence from one of the varieties of culture, and that not the least difficult and laborious. The influence of Puritan ideas has prolonged itself down to the present day, at least in the sense of opposition to the new Paganism of the Renascence. There have been instances in the fine arts when some great lady was celebrated for the beauty of her body, and it was painted or carved from nature as a Venus, but these have not occurred in countries where Puritanism had any influence. It may be doubted even whether a Scotch lady would consent to be painted, like Madame Récamier, with naked feet.

A more subtle and less obvious influence against the body in portraiture is the intellectual culture which has given a special importance to all the signs of mind. The face and head are considered to be everything in the intellectual portrait, the body is of little or no account. Just enough body is given to prove that it has not been decapitated, and even this is concealed in black. A better kind of portrait for scientific men whose studies take them out of doors is that of which Mr. Hole has given us a good example in his etching of Professor Geikie, the geologist, out amongst the rocks in his walking dress. And although hunting portraits are not often the most satisfactory as art, one reason being the difficulty of treating scarlet, they have, nevertheless, a distinct advantage over the scholarly portrait in the frequent representation of an active and manly frame. It is no more than just to render in this place a tribute of respect for the truth and sincerity in the hunting portraits by Sir Francis Grant, a very English kind of art which has little in common with the great Spanish or Italian masters, but is founded on the most intimate knowledge of the class of men represented, as well as of their favourite exercise. English pictures of hunting-men, and also of jockeys on race-horses, are condemned by the nature of things to take inferior rank, though great artists have made noble pictures out of horsemanship in ruder and less cultivated forms. There seems to be a law that when any art reaches a perfection of its own, that

special perfection has a character that makes it unsuitable for representation in another art. In this case it is the neatness of perfect tailoring, boot-making, saddlery, and grooming that spoils the hunting portrait. The military portrait is very liable to be spoiled in the same way by the neatness and tidiness of modern uniforms. Velasquez himself could hardly have contended against a difficulty so pervading as that of costume. There is an amazing portrait by Velasquez in the Berlin Museum, that of Alessandro del Borro, an Italian captain. The painter seems to have had a profoundly humorous enjoyment of his subject. Never was there a more complete expression of pride and self-satisfaction. The huge chin, the enormous paunch, the supercilious look of the half-closed eyes, the incomparable attitude, all seem to translate into painting the sonorous Latin word *Superbia.* As we look up to him—for the painter makes us look *up* to him from below—we wonder and admire, we exclaim, "O captain of all captains, thou art indeed prodigious!" The strength of characterisation in this painting is, however, only one of its merits. As much character might have been put into a modern figure and left it little more than a design for *Punch.* A modern Captain Borro would have amused England for a week and then been forgotten, but Alessandro lives for ever! He lives because the picture is so grand and so complete, and this completeness is an affair of costume. He is dressed in velvet with a handsome pattern; he has collar and cuffs, not like ours, but falling well and paintable. His stout legs are not in trousers, but in well-fitting stockings—"du bronze coulé dans un bas de soie," to quote the devoted Jasmin, valet of the Marquis de la Seiglière. He drapes himself, his right hand lifts up a sort of festoon. What would the head be without all this fulness of Alessandro's vast and imposing personality?

I have said elsewhere that the face does not reveal the mind completely, so that the portraiture of the face gives an imperfect idea of a man's genius and learning; and although it may be easier, or *seem* easier, to judge of the qualities of his body, even here an invisible element has to be taken into account, the greater or less supply of nervous energy, and this the sculptor or painter can never make apparent. It is easy to write a paragraph that will go beyond the limits of all graphic or plastic art. Let me try it in a brief description of one whom I knew intimately.

His complexion was pale, which gave the idea of ill-health, and his face was often thoughtful. His stature was rather below the middle height, and his limbs were not muscular. He had a remarkable power of long-sustained intellectual application. In the study he allowed nothing to disturb the regularity of his labour, but worked in sittings of three hours each, the last as assiduously as the first.

So far, the description is paintable, the student may be represented at his table—students have frequently been so represented from the monks of the Middle Ages down to Maclise's caricature sketch of Charles Lamb. In what now follows I go far beyond the range of drawing.

At the same time it would be an error to suppose that he had not great physical gifts, though no one would have suspected their existence in his sedentary hours. Nothwithstanding the small volume of his muscles, they were of good quality, for he was a bold and expert swimmer, a keen sportsman, and able to endure long-continued fatigue, not only without distress, but cheerfully and even gaily. Being also of a fearless and combative disposition, he much regretted that he had not been bred for the army.

Now this contradiction between the visible physical gifts and the invisible forces is just what the graphic arts can never explain, so that a very important part of the physical constitution must escape from their cognisance. Besides this, they can only set forth the *appearance* of health, not its reality. A novelist, in two words, can suggest the existence of a disease that will be mortal but has not yet become visible; a painter takes note only of its advanced stages.

Two personages whose figures have often been painted and are likely to appear very frequently in pictures during future ages are the first Napoleon and Prince Bismarck. If represented quite truly according to that merely external truth which the art of painting so effectively presents, Napoleon would seem a man of almost contemptible physical endowments, and Bismarck a son and successor of the giants. This only shows how deceptive such appearances may be, for the *invisible* physical power in Napoleon was almost as rare as his military genius.

A few words may be said in conclusion about the importance of the hand in portrait. In the lowest degradation of this art the hands and costume are given over to be done by assistants, and often with little or no reference to the individual peculiarities of the sitter. I notice that in the recent evil development of French art, where simple daubing is substituted for painting, the hands are neglected because they require too much drawing and too close an attention to truth of characteristic and individual detail. They are daubed in hastily under pretext of concentrating attention on the face. I remember one impressionist picture in which the lady wears yellow gloves that fit her badly, and the gloves have simply been sketched in colour and left so, with perhaps five minutes' work to each of them. This is a business-like economy of time.

Amongst the drawings left to us by the old masters, we find a sufficient number of studies of hands to prove that they paid careful attention to that

member. There are studies by Michael Angelo which show that his imagination did not emancipate him from such details as finger-joints, which seem to be beneath the geniuses of our own day, whilst the studies of Albert Dürer not only show the inflexions of the fingers (*e.g.* the bending back and inside of the little finger) but they follow the veins and the wrinkles of skin upon the knuckles.

In the portrait of Erasmus by Holbein (Louvre) the hands are drawn with the most extreme precision even to the four rings on the first and third fingers of the left hand and to the shape of the nails. We see exactly the manner of writing adopted by Erasmus, his way of holding the pen, and the nature of his hands, which were rather thick, short, and muscular. They are drawn with the same painstaking deliberation that Holbein gave to the profile of the face, and that his fidelity might be the better assured he made separate studies, which give interesting evidence that he had not at first quite decided upon their present position in the picture.

It would be interesting to follow the study of the hand from the Middle Ages downwards. The student of art-history who did this would very probably be surprised by early examples of much better drawing than early general culture would have led him to expect. There are some early works in which the hand is correctly and even beautifully drawn, though the artist was by no means a master of bodily action and proportions generally. The explanation is that the hand was a part of the body that every draughtsman saw habitually in the most various forms, that he could notice and compare and even draw from the living model. For the hand and face, and occasionally for the feet, the mediæval artist might be a student of the nude, so we find examples of mediæval figures with considerable individuality in these exposed parts, but for the rest only clothes with no forms inside them. So long as painting remained primitive in its technical principles, that is, clear in linear drawing, the hand was at least carefully outlined and modelled as far as the science of the time permitted. The reader will find a pretty instance in the child's hand in the picture by Ghirlandajo in this volume. I believe it may be taken as a safe rule that the love of the line, as the line is understood by painters and pure line-engravers, is always a security for the sufficient study of the hand, but that when painters turn to impressionism (that is, to effect) and engravers to etching, the hand is often sketched hastily and treated as very subordinate to the face. This may be partly because the old linear art was very calm in temper and disposed to spend its labour equally over the whole picture, whilst the impressionist and the etcher have often been in a hurry to realise their ideas, and having given their time to the head, dismissed the extremities

too summarily. In Rembrandt, the hand is always treated with great care when it can be made expressive, especially when it is pathetic in old people. No one ever understood the pathos of old age in a hand better than he. There is a good example of an old hand in the portrait given in this volume. Another very good instance is Jacob's right hand resting negligently on his knee as he listens to Joseph telling his dream (see the small etching with that title). For the hands of an old woman, I can hardly mention a better plate than the little one of the old woman asleep. Rembrandt often put a great deal of action and expression into his hands; there is one little plate, "Jacob Lamenting the Death of Joseph," in which six hands are visible, and all eloquent either in demonstration or in grief. Still, it must be admitted that in the slightest and swiftest work of Rembrandt the faces are usually much better than the hands, and naturally so, not only because the face absorbs most of the artist's attention as the centre of expression, but also because the hand is so complex and elaborate as a piece of construction that if it is hastily drawn it is almost sure to be badly drawn—I mean that the proportions will be wrong, and that the rapid sketch must result in what we should call deformity if we met with it in nature, though we excuse it more or less indulgently in art. There are so many joints in the hand (fourteen are visible) and so many bones to be drawn in due proportions, not to speak of the muscles and the nails, that these parts, all of them important, become details of the vexatious kind when an artist has not time to think of them one by one. The only satisfactory way in portrait is to give ample time and study to the hand, as Holbein did in his "Erasmus," and as Bonnat has recently done with striking success in his portrait of "Renan." Another remarkable modern example is M. Chartran's "Leo XIII.," where the thin fingers of the almost diaphanous pontiff, with their pointed tips and delicate nails, seem scarcely strong enough to lift up the golden monstrance when he says mass.

An important use of the hand in portrait has been to convey the idea of aristocracy. It would tell of labour with equal distinctness, and has done so in many studies of working men, chiefly fishermen and agricultural labourers, which are in reality portraits, though they do not bear the name. As the poor man does not pay to be painted, the realistic artist is accustomed to tell the plain truth about his hands, more picturesque than those which have done no manual work. In the aristocratic portrait the artist insists upon the whiteness and delicacy of the hand for two reasons—an artistic reason, as a fair skin is prettier than a callous one, and a social reason, because all the world over people are proud of being above the necessity for manual labour. The best example of this social superiority is reflected in

Chinese portraits, where persons of distinction have nails so long as to resemble the claws of bears. The notion of aristocracy is always associated with some sort of care and culture, either the nails are carefully preserved, or they are cut with nicety in some predetermined shape, and it is the rule in aristocracies, but a rule that has not always been without exceptions, to keep them white and clean. As to this matter of cleanliness there is some contradiction between what artists have to tell us of the cleanliness of great people in the past and what we learn from contemporary observers. It may have been a part of artistic idealisation to make them cleaner at the same time that they were made to look handsomer and of a livelier intelligence. In the early part of the eighteenth century the hand was often conspicuous in portrait, and almost invariably used to enhance the impression of refinement, not only by its own evident exemption from all mean or servile occupations, but by the jewelled rings upon the fingers and the glove they held loosely in their grasp.

CHAPTER X

THE HAIR AND BEARD IN PORTRAIT

ABOUT the middle of the nineteenth century there arose in Europe a great rebellion against the tyranny of the razor, the ultimate consequence of which has been the establishment of all but complete liberty to use that instrument or throw it away. This has been truly a great model and example of reforms, for whereas in other reforms liberty has been usually no better than a pretext (the real object of the reformer being the substitution of his own tyranny for that of another), we have here an example of a reform, almost unique in the history of the world, in which the process seems to have stopped at the intermediate stage of complete liberty, the new tyranny (that long experience might have led us to expect) having never as yet been able to establish itself. It would have been consistent with the usual considerateness of fashion to require all men whatever to grow beards, whether nature had provided them with that ornament or not. They would then have worn false beards as their great grandfathers wore wigs, and as ladies of the present day are in the habit of mingling purchased tresses with their own.

It would be too much to expect any consistency in prejudice, but is it not wonderful that at the very time when the beard was considered ugly, filthy, and inadmissible in its natural reality, it was respected in works of art? Nothing proves more completely than this separation of sentiments what a different thing art really is from nature, and how completely the two may be separated in the popular mind. The public judged rightly of the nobility of the beard in painting and sculpture, whilst looking upon it on the living face as a reaction against all the benefits of civilisation, and an outrage against good manners. In art the beard was worn by the most venerated religious leaders, both of Judaism and Christianity; whilst in real life it was a sign of ungodliness and revolution. Another wonderful inconsistency in the public opinion of those days was that the beard was

looked upon as anti-national, a sign of revolt against the social discipline of England, whilst at the same time the walls of every great English home, and the pages of every English biographical dictionary, were adorned with paintings or engravings of bearded Englishmen at least as distinguished for their patriotism as the shaven subjects of the Georges.

A truthful account of the unscrupulous defence of shaving is that the dying authority of custom was maintained by the use of any weapon that came to hand. On the principle that "any stick is good enough to beat a dog with," the beard-wearer was accused of being dirty and ill-bred, though many of the finest gentlemen in the world had been amongst his predecessors. Now that the controversy is settled for England by princely and lordly example, we are free to consider the beard simply on its artistic merits.

I agree so far with the beard-haters of 1850 as to admit the wideness of the difference that exists between the fine arts and reality. Things may be desirable in art and undesirable in actual life. The picturesque aspects of life are much more common amongst the poor, and especially amongst the idle and careless poor, than amongst the careful and orderly classes. The beggars of Rembrandt are picturesque; a London banker is not picturesque. It is the same with habitations; the experienced sketcher seeks and finds his best subjects in the worst and oldest parts of continental cities; he does not go to the new boulevards. It may be, then, that there is something in shaving analogous to such a triumph of civilisation as a rich man's well-kept garden; and so there is, in the determination to keep up a steady unrelaxing warfare against Nature. Man decides where grass shall grow and where hair shall grow. He makes a desert with sand and gravel, and the razor makes another little desert on his chin. The wilfulness of mastery makes him delight in the strongest contrasts of fertility and barrenness. He shaves away every vestige of natural hair from his face and rejoices in an enormous wig; or he shaves his head in the Chinese fashion whilst cultivating the longest possible pig-tail; or he does just the opposite by clearing the place of the pig-tail with the strictly local baldness of the tonsure. On the face itself the love of trenchant contrasts is equally marked. Some, like King Humbert of Italy, shave away beard and whisker, leaving a moustache huge in itself, and magnified yet more by its isolation. Others remove the moustache entirely whilst leaving the beard, for convenience in eating and drinking. The most English fashion in 1850 was to clear the chin and upper lip and leave a sharp line of whisker on each side of the face, this custom being then the mark of civilian respectability. When high foreheads are in fashion women shave their front hair,

according to the hideous practice that prevailed in Italy in the fifteenth century; and when it is the fashion to show as little of the face as possible, they plaster their hair on each side of the eyes. All these practices, however apparently various, have one quality in common, that of establishing more trenchant distinctions than Nature herself would have established, and so giving to the face an artificial character like that which gardeners give to a plot of land. It is this artificial character which our fathers associated so inseparably with civilisation that the loss of it seemed to them a movement in the direction of barbarism. At the same time it is just these trenchant artificial demarcations that are unpleasant to the eye of a painter. They occur occasionally in nature, but the rule is that between hairy and hairless skin there is a soft intermediate transition of down and short hairs unless the razor has cleared them away. In the finest painting the transition from hair to flesh is usually managed with great care, so as to avoid brusqueness; in bad painting there is no such transition, so that the contrast comes suddenly as between the wax complexion of a hairdresser's model and the sham moustache that is gummed on to it.

These may seem trifling matters, but they are full of historical and artistic interest. An account of the history of the beard would be out of place in the present volume, and has already been given by other writers. It is enough to say in general terms that the beard has been sometimes trimmed in various ways, and sometimes partially or entirely shaven in all countries and in all ages that can be considered in any degree civilised. It is not *shaving* (as used to be supposed in England) that is the mark of civilisation, but the *care* of the beard in a great variety of ways, even including the negative care about it which consists in removing it altogether. The only mark of perfect savagery would be complete neglect, and this is what is hardly ever met with except amongst the filthiest inhabitants of the most backward countries.

The artistic point of view is independent of practices in real life which may be determined by reasons that have nothing to do with art. For example, priests of the Church of Rome are for the most part shaven, the chief exception being missionary priests who wear the beard as the sign that they have been *in partibus infidelium*. In the Greek Church, on the contrary, the beard is not connected with the idea of travel in heathen lands, but with the idea of holiness at home, so that it is the common ornament of priests who are able to cultivate it, and the tradition in their case may be traced back to the Jewish veneration for the beard. In the Anglican Church of the present day there is no fixed rule, so that in this case shaving has become at last disconnected from religion. In the

military and legal professions we remember a time when the moustache was considered right for cavalry men and improper for foot soldiers, and yet there is no necessary connection of the moustache with horsemanship, as the English hunting squires, who were first-rate horsemen, persistently shaved it off. In France the shaven chin, with whiskers, is associated with the idea of domestic service.

In all these cases, and others too numerous for special mention, different fashions of wearing the beard come to have a significance from the association of ideas which is irresistible in its effect upon the vulgar, but from which nothing delivers us so completely as a knowledge of the history of art. This presents the whole subject to us from a different and a higher point of view. It shows us, in the first place, that fashions have been local and temporary in reality, though they may have been widespread and have seemed, in their day, a part of the eternal fitness of things. And again, it gives us another and a better criterion than custom. There is a certain *artistic reasonableness* which is above custom and its supreme judge.

For example, in the use of the great powdered wigs that adorned the heads of our great grandfathers, there is still a sort of reason, utterly artificial as they were. It was an artistic instinct that made them shave their faces completely, as nothing could be more incongruous than the class-fashion of the periwig with the untameable individuality of the beard. The periwig was the triumph of the class over the individual; the entire class might wear the same periwig, but a man's beard protested in favour of personality. Again, there was something feminine in the long wig, as many women, though few men, can grow such a quantity of hair, so the smooth chin consistently completed the effeminateness of the face. Nature was hidden on the head and expelled, as much as possible, from what was left visible. That the triumph of artifice might be complete, the hair itself was in innumerable and unnatural curls, and these were not allowed to remain of their natural colour, but were made gray with powder. All this is against nature from first to last, but it keeps together, it is consistent art. Now, try the effect of breaking the consistency by introducing nature in one part and not in another. Let the bewigged grandee simply abstain from shaving, and what is the consequence? The beard goes badly with the wig, it is as out of place as natural manners amidst the acting of a punctilious and polite society.

The great full-bottomed wig does well in the state portrait, provided that it is surrounded with highly artificial things; it would be ridiculous without them. The dependence of artificial things upon each other may be realised by imagining a nude figure in a wild natural landscape painted

carefully on the same principles as the face, but adorned with a wig and nothing else. It would be like the negro's full dress of an evening coat only.

The masculine peruke had its feminine counterpart in the towering head-dress, also monstrously inconvenient. This invention increased the impression of stature, but diminished the relative importance of the face. Under the loftiest head-dresses an ordinary visage became childishly insignificant. Here, again, the sense of art required a compensation which was given by the amplitude of the skirt, so that a woman became chiefly head-dress and petticoat, and would have been extinguished altogether by these adjuncts without the intelligence in her expression and the brilliance of her eyes.

The classicism of the first French Empire has often been treated with great contempt by more recent criticism, but it had the merit of simplifying both head-dresses and costumes generally. The old absurdities died hard, so that for some time after the establishment of Napoleon's power it was still the rule for hussars to wear plaited tresses of true or false hair, like women, on each side of the face and a pig-tail behind, of which a reminiscence is preserved for us by Meissonier in his picture of the *Estafette*, who inspires a pathetic interest as much by the absurdity of his head-gear as the hardness of his military duty. Still, the *tendency* of Napoleon's time was towards a rational simplicity in everything, and of this he himself, when youth was past, set the example. He wore his own natural hair, long at first when it grew luxuriantly, and cut short in middle age. He was always artistically consistent. He shaved the whole of his face together, and so did his nephew and imitator Jerome—a treatment in which there is no rebellion against the principles of art, and indeed the severe and classical beauty of Napoleon's face, as we see it upon his coinage, was preserved for us by the razor. A *complete* clearance of the growth on the face is safer from the artistic point of view than a capricious and partial one; it is a decided preference, quite justifiable in many cases, of classical to picturesque beauty. One cannot imagine how any kind of beard could have added anything to the expression of Napoleon's face, he was martial enough without the help of the moustache, and the beard has always a tendency to make the general expression softer and milder, which is not what a pitiless despot would desire. Alexander, Cæsar, and Duke William of Normandy were all clean shaven men like Napoleon, and in our own time this tradition has been maintained by the naked face of Von Moltke. The bearded conquerors include Charlemagne and several Asiatic sovereigns, of whom the Assyrian despots were magnificent

examples, as their noble beards were trimmed and curled with consummate art. Charles the Fifth, in the portrait by Titian, is neither shaven nor yet endowed with a beard imposing enough for his greatness, but in all these cases there is nothing unfavourable to painting.

The pursuit of different branches of the fine arts may have some practical effect on the public mind with regard to fashion in the growth of the hair and beard. If we consider the subject in itself, and at first without reference to examples, it seems as if the ages in which sculpture is the predominant art would be on the whole less favourable to the hair and beard than the ages of painting, but that sculpture might have a peculiar influence of its own. Sculpture can interpret some elements of the beauty of hair, but is absolutely incompetent to represent some others, so that whilst sculpture can say a good deal *about* hair, in its own way, it is still really unable to imitate it. In nature hair has very peculiar qualities, due to the strength or the fineness, the greater or less degree of transparence of the individual hairs, and also to their springing power, and to the degrees of their natural curvature. Sculpture translates all these qualities by masses of a hard and opaque substance which, whether it be marble or metal, or whatever else, does not contain within itself the spaces that exist in nature between the individual hairs, and therefore cannot receive light in the same way. The light strikes *upon* the marble beard, it entangles itself *within* the natural beard. Again, a great part of the beauty of nature, as to hair, is dependent on varieties of quality and colour as it passes from the down of the cheek through the first short hairs to the longer ones, and there are great differences of density in the masses, much of the beauty of nature being due, in this matter, to the lightness of the hairs that finish, for example, the ends of the moustache, and to their separation. There is much in this description of which sculpture can take no cognizance whatever, and as for the extreme delicacy in the fair hair of little girls, as it tosses in the sunshine when they run about on a summer's day, there is no substance fit for a sculptor's use that can give any idea of it. Let him try ivory, or onyx, or a mingling of silver and gold, they are as hard as a smith's anvil in comparison with the living reality. So that, notwithstanding the undeniable power of the sculptor to describe the beard and hair as being of imposing growth and noble arrangement, as in the bearded portrait-bust of Rude in the Louvre, or Mr. Woolner's equally fine bust of Thomas Combe, which is not less magnificent than might have been some ideal conception of a Hebrew prophet, it is still certain that the sculptor praises the beauty of hair in a language that, for such a purpose, is inadequate, whilst, on the contrary, his art is at its best in the representa-

PORTRAIT OF THOMAS COMBE

MARBLE BUST BY THOMAS WOOLNER, R.A.

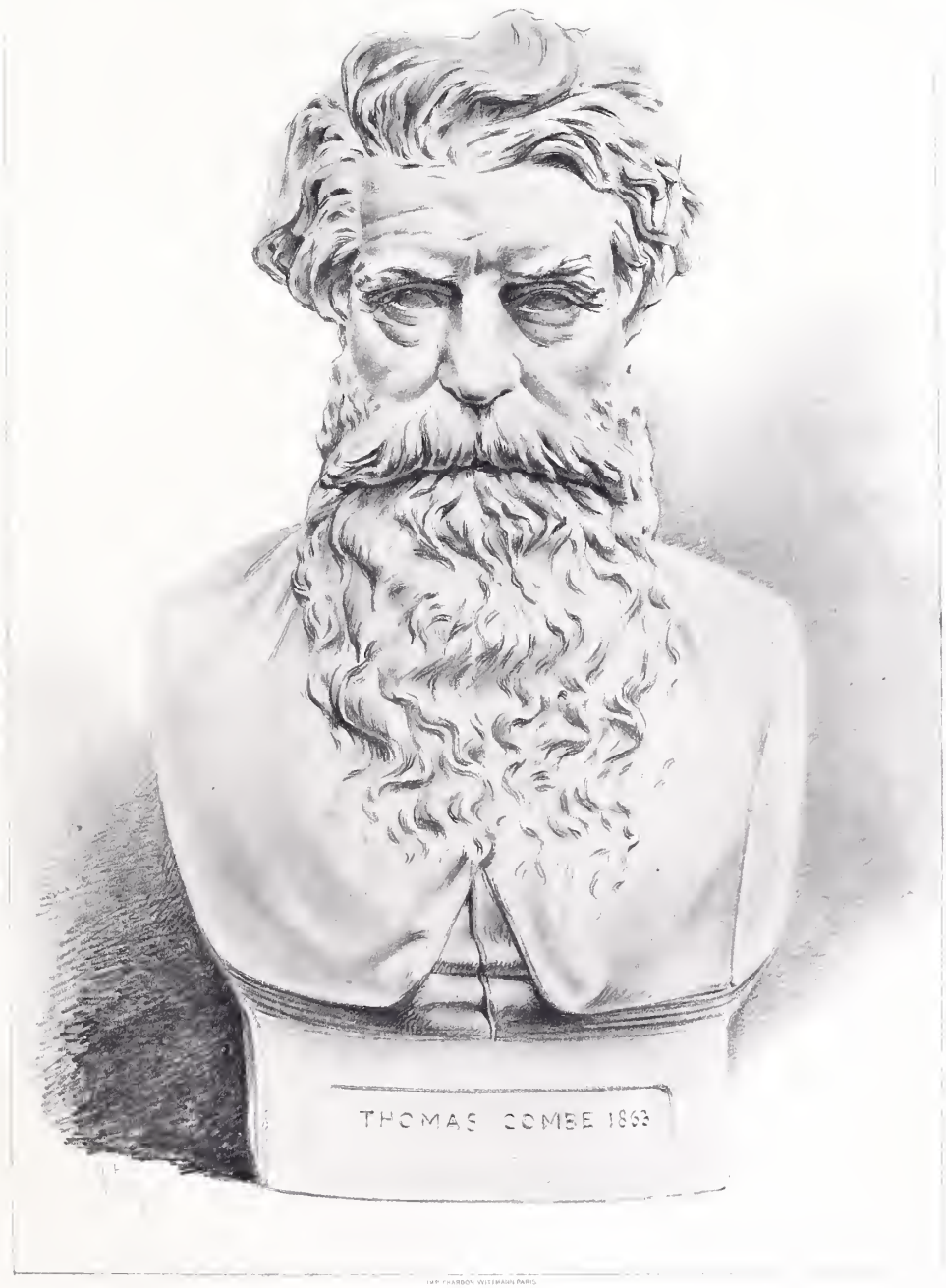
HYALOGRAPH DRAWN BY G. DE ROTON

CHOSEN to represent manhood in full maturity both of mind and body, and also as an example of the treatment of the hair and beard in sculpture.

I do not remember in all plastic art a more magnificent example of the hair and beard *taken from actual life*. There are ideal examples that may surpass this, but purely as mental conceptions.

The face, a most powerful one, naturally carried well the dignity of the beard. To appreciate the value of the beard we have only to imagine it removed. The harshest treatment of all for such a face would be to shave the chin and upper lips and leave whiskers, sharply defined.

Almost without idealisation this head might represent some great prophet or apostle. The sculptor himself, who kindly permitted me to publish this drawing, had also a noble beard which increased in beauty as he approached the old age which, alas! he was not destined to attain.



IMP. CHARDON-WITTMANN, PARIS.

tion of the smooth skin-clad muscle, and of just so much of bone as is visible through the living flesh. The probability is then that sculpture, so far as it had any influence on fashion, would encourage simplicity and good taste rather than luxuriance in the head-dresses of women, and complete shaving, like that of Napoleon, in men; or if sculpture encouraged the growth of the beard at all, it would be favourable to the massive and very mature beard, of which the best-known example is that of the Moses of Michael Angelo.

The influence of painting, on the other hand, is much in favour of hair, because although painting can never rival the beauties of natural hair, there is not one of them that it is unable to suggest. In the hands of the few great masters, who have done all that painting can without allowing themselves to be led away by the mistaken toiling after an impossible minuteness, the art has expressed the colour of hair, its softness, its peculiar way of taking the light, and its emancipation from its own masses —qualities all entirely beyond the reach of the plastic arts. In painting the representation of hair gives a technical pleasure, in sculpture it only excites intelligent admiration. We admire the artist's power of abstraction, and his prudence in avoiding insuperable difficulties. An age in which painting, especially in oil, was powerful and influential, would therefore probably be a beard-wearing age; and as to the head-dresses of women, it would be an age in which the tendency to naturalism would manifest itself by the abandonment of stiff and lofty superstructures. In confirmation of this probability we find the beard appearing in the places and times where painting has most flourished. It was worn by the contemporaries of Titian, Lionardo da Vinci, and Michael Angelo, by the contemporaries of Rubens, Rembrandt, and Vandyke, and now again by the contemporaries of Meissonier and Millais. It is true that the age of Reynolds and Gainsborough was not a beard-wearing age, but the English school was young at that time, and had not yet acquired any general influence over the national customs. Such influence as it had was exerted on the side of nature and reason, as far as was consistent with the truthful representation of a society still governed by unnatural fashions. I mean that Sir Joshua and his best fellow-artists made the hair in their portraits natural when they could, and charmingly so in their pictures of children. The connection of the beard-movement in the nineteenth century with the increased popularity of painting is certainly not accidental. If we call a beard handsome or venerable in a picture, it is an easy transition to the appreciation of its qualities in the life.

The revival of another art may have had some degree of influence. It

happens that the qualities of etching are favourable to the representation of hair. The works of the old masters include some striking examples, and modern etchers have successfully tried their skill on the same problems of technical execution. The beard and hair have been engraved with endless labour and astonishing skill by the great masters of the burin, especially by Albert Dürer in the well-known portrait of himself, where his long locks are copied most elaborately. The hair, too, in the portrait of Bilibald Pirkheimer, though much simpler, is a good example of Dürer's method in the treatment of hair, and so are the long locks of the "Prodigal Son," and the curly head of the wild man in the "Shield with the Death's Head." A minor example, yet sufficient as an explanation of method, is the hair of the Cardinal Archbishop Albert of Magdeburg and Maintz given in the present volume. The reader will see that burin engraving of this pure kind gives the curves of hair very beautifully, and separates lock from lock in a very distinct manner, but substitutes a peculiar quality of its own (the quality of the *burin line*, I cannot compare it with anything in nature) for that of human hair, yet I am taking as an example a bit of first-rate work. If the reader will now turn to the whiskers and beard of the etched portrait by Rembrandt he will find something that, without attempting to rival the minuteness of nature, really does convey, at the cost of slight but most suggestive labour, a strikingly truthful idea of an old man's beard. As an example of Rembrandt's treatment of the hair of the head, I need only mention the portrait of himself called "Rembrandt leaning on a Stone Sill," where the long hair descends on the shoulders with the abundance, though not the formality, of a wig.

With all our respect for nature, we must admit that there is disproportion somewhere in the wonderful inequality with which hair is distributed amongst mankind. It seems to depend simply on the fertility of capillary roots, without the slightest reference to the height, or even to the physical vigour of the man. There are beards so long as to be simply inconvenient curiosities. Some have reached to the ground, and one, belonging to a peasant in the French district of the Nivernais, is so long that it goes first to the ground, then up over his arm and nearly to the ground again. Others are more remarkable for abundance than for length, so that the proud possessor carries before him hair enough to stuff a cushion, which would be a comfortable use thereof. Human vanity finds it difficult to sacrifice a natural ornament when it is exceptional of its kind; so Meissonier the painter, who was a vain little Frenchman, and the spoilt child of success and fame, was proud of his wavy and divided beard, a curiously perfect specimen, and painted it in a noble portrait of himself with loving care and

THE ARCHBISHOP OF MAINTZ

LINE-ENGRAVING BY ALBERT DÜRER

REPRODUCED IN HÉLIOGRAVURE BY AMAND-DURAND

THE title given above is much abridged. The full title is "The smaller portrait of the Cardinal Archbishop Albert of Magdeburg and Maintz." There is a larger engraved portrait by Dürer of the same prelate.

This is a very pure and perfect example of early line-engraving. The reader will observe that there is but little local colour (what there is will be found in the curtain behind the figure), all the lights in the face, barette, and cape, being equally white. On comparing this work with the portrait of Rembrandt he will at once see the differences in quality between true line-engraving and etching, each of these works being representative of the art to which it belongs.

Promotion came early to priests of high family in the sixteenth century. This gentleman was an Archbishop at the age of twenty-three. In the portrait before us he is twenty-nine, and already a Cardinal. Truly a model for boys who want to get on in the world!

ALBERTVS · MI · DI · SA · SANC ·
ROMANAE · ECCLAE · TI · SAN ·
CHRYSOGONI · PBR · CARDINA ·
MAGVN · AC · MAGDE · ARCHI ·
EPS · ELECTOR · IMPE · PRIMAS
ADMINI · HALBER · MARCHI ·
BRANDENBVRGENSIS

SIC OCVLOS SIC ILLE GENAS SIC
ORA FEREBAT
ANNO ETATIS SVE XXIX
M · D XIX ·

unaffected admiration. He might have pleaded the example of the pastellist Liotard, of Geneva, who worked and wandered much in the eighteenth century, and has left a portrait of himself, now in the Rath Museum of his native town, which is mainly a study of his great cascade of a beard, and his hair, which (to continue the landscape simile) is like bushes above the cascade. When the growth, as in this instance, is of excessive luxuriance, the whole human creature becomes little more than a support for it, and almost as secondary as the hop-stick to the hop.

MAN IN ART

PART VI

LIFE OBSERVED

A MEDITATION AT MOONRISE

JAPANESE WOODCUT

(*Reproduction by Guillaume*)

WHEN I was at school the Japanese language was not amongst our subjects, so I cannot translate the inscription, but this is unnecessary, as every reviewer will do it for me.

The woodcut is from a Japanese book that belongs to the time of the purest Japanese art, before it had become infected with European ideas.

The Japanese have constantly associated man with landscape. This gentleman is walking abroad at the most poetical hour of the evening. My belief is that he must be a poet. The technical judgment shown in the drawing is so perfect that our greatest European illustrators merely follow it. The elements are the pure line, the white space, the black space, and linear shading, without cross-hatching and invariably in the right direction.

The landscape is simple and has few tonic values, but it proves knowledge and observation. The scene is probably on the shore of the inland sea. The moon is rising behind a promontory or island with trees upon it which are distinguishable, as in nature, against her disc, but not elsewhere. There are white horizontal clouds above the gentleman's head. The water takes the moonlight in silver where the light breezes play, in the calms it is dark, as in nature. No other landscape art tells so much truth with so much brevity and abstraction.

手操頼房
泉刕堺の人〻〻〻小西氏なり天性柔和
〻〻〻よく陰徳を施し貧き人を救ふ
士人共人〻〻〻神のごとく尊むとぞ
十三七八

CHAPTER I

THE FIGURE IN LANDSCAPE

THE introduction of human beings into the painted landscape varies in scale and importance according to the following divisions, which are not so minute as they might be:—

1. The figure is absolutely predominant, as in a portrait with a slight sketch of landscape instead of the conventional pillar and curtain.

2. Figures are so grouped in a landscape as to give the scenery an importance almost equal to their own.

3. The landscape is predominant as to area of canvas, but the figure by dramatic significance. Much of what is called "historical landscape" is of this order.

4. The figure has no special significance, but still holds an important place in the composition, which would be destroyed by its removal.

5. The figure is, at the same time, insignificant and unimportant, the landscape being absolutely predominant. The figure might be removed without loss.

These five cases include the majority of pictures in which landscape is introduced. The first is too familiar to need commentary; here the landscape background is used merely to give rural associations when the personage possesses a country-seat or has the taste of a sportsman; he is hardly in the landscape, but there is a hint of trees and fields behind him.

In the second case, the landscape may be very important pictorially by form, and may have powerful imaginative influence by effect. Then the figure and landscape act together to produce a calculated unity of impression on the mind. This is very frequently contrived in poetry. In that art pure landscape without human interest is rare, yet few poets have failed to perceive the value of landscape, if carefully and judicially chosen, for the completion of the poetic charm. The poets sometimes even make us look out of the window to intensify an impression already received

in an interior. In "The Holy Grail" Tennyson wishes to convey the idea of solitude when Lancelot wanders through the enchanted castle of Carbonek :—

> "And up into the sounding hall I past;
> But nothing in the sounding hall I saw,
> No bench nor table, painting on the wall
> Or shield of knight."

Could this impression of solitude be enhanced? Yes, by making Lancelot look out for a view and discover—

> "*Only the rounded moon*
> *Thro' the tall oriel on the rolling sea.*"

My third division, in which landscape is predominant by area of canvas, but the figure by dramatic significance, is one of the most important, because it affords conclusive proof of the enormous power of human interest in the graphic arts. If the lines and masses of the compositions are so arranged as to lead the eye to the figures, and if the figures themselves are dramatically conceived, they may be on a very small scale, yet they will hold their own effectually. In literature this goes so far that if the mind and eye are directed to a spot, the very *absence* of a figure there may be profoundly interesting. One of the best examples is the last incident in the *Bride of Lammermoor*, when Caleb Balderstone "hastened to the eastern battlement which commanded the prospect of the whole sands, very near as far as the village of Wolf's-hope. He could easily see his master riding in that direction as fast as the horse could carry him." Hitherto we have the interest of the figure in the landscape; the close of the sentence has the still more poignant interest of its disappearance. "He saw him accordingly reach the fatal spot, *but he never saw him pass further.*" The same effect is repeated on the following page, and still more powerfully. "The sun had now risen, and showed its broad disk above the eastern sea, so that Colonel Ashton could easily discern the horseman who rode towards him with speed which argued impatience equal to his own. *At once the figure became invisible, as if it had melted into the air.* He rubbed his eyes as if he had witnessed an apparition."

Painting could not go so far as this without an explanatory title, which itself trenches on literature and so is better avoided. In Wilson's landscape of "Celadon and Amelia" the names, it is true, refer to a literary work, but the incident is intelligible in itself, and the thunderstorm explains the cause of death. A pictorial explanation is equally easy in pictures of military incidents that occur in large landscape compositions. A weary soldier tramping on a long road alone, a knight in armour riding through

a forest, are subjects that admit of small figures which are sure not to be overlooked. In one of Rembrandt's landscapes there are two lovers at the foot of an enormous oak; they are smaller in proportion than they ought to be, yet it is probable that nobody ever failed to notice them.

In my fourth division "the figure has no special significance, but still holds an important place in the composition, which would be destroyed by its removal." Here the importance of the figure is not dramatic or poetical, but technical, and as all technical considerations have great weight in the graphic arts, the figure is as important as before, though without any dramatic or intellectual significance. We have now arrived at one of those points of separation in the fine arts where the literary spirit goes one way and the artistic spirit another. Nothing is more common in literary criticism, even by eminent men, than to undervalue art which is destitute of dramatic or intellectual interest. They think it is mindless. Even the whole of landscape art, which is a translation of sentiment into colour, as music is a translation of it into sound, may appear mindless to an intellect reared exclusively upon literature. When some critics meet with an angler by a painted river they say, "Ah, the usual angler, the inevitable angler!" not pausing to consider whether he is intelligently or unintelligently placed. If the figure is where he ought to be from the technical point of view, and holds his place in the scheme of colour, or as a focus of light or dark, there has been intelligence in the placing of him whether he himself is a philosopher or the village idiot.

The fifth division included only those figures which are, at the same time, insignificant and technically unimportant, so that they might be removed without loss. In cases of this kind the interest of the figure is null, it is neither technical nor artistic. The figure exists merely in deference to an old prejudice, now happily almost extinct, which held the presence of life to be essential in a landscape. When there is no better reason than this for the introduction of a human being, he is not likely to be either wisely placed or well executed, and is not worth critical attention. The best that can be said in his favour is that he is unobtrusive and harmless.

There is a theory that figures and landscape, when in the same picture, ought to be executed exactly on the same principles and in the same way. It is a very tempting and plausible theory, because it appears to insure unity, which of all qualities in a work of art is the most desirable. The proper test of a theory is, however, a reference to actual practice, and if we look at what has been done instead of speculating on what ought to be done, we find the most various degrees of difference. In the pictures by

mediæval illuminators the landscapes are, no doubt, executed on the same principles as the figures. The landscape is looked upon as an agglomeration of definite objects, like the parts of a personage or the details of his dress. This is carried out in the engraved landscapes of Dürer, where you can count the distant trees. In riper art, as in that of Raphael, there is no longer the same insistence upon a multiplicity of objects, which become fewer and more simplified, but they are drawn with the same care as the figures, though with inferior knowledge. Titian's distant landscape shows a sense of mass that answers to the massive arrangement of his draperies and his indifference to minute ornament. So far, there is a close connection between landscape and figures, but in the eighteenth century the principle of sacrifice is understood, and landscape is sacrificed to figure by the sketchy treatment of Watteau, and the professed indifference with which Reynolds looks upon such distinctions as the special characteristics of trees. Here we have, then, a peculiar connection between figure and landscape—that is to say, the finished figure in the sacrificed landscape. No more ingenious device could have been hit upon for giving importance to the figure at the smallest possible cost of labour to the artist. The figure-painter performs a solo, then he turns landscape-painter in his background, and performs a subordinated accompaniment to his own solo.

I am not aware that the converse of this is ever done by landscape-painters to the same degree. Their figures are often ill-drawn, like their animals, but they have never, so far as I know, maintained the theory that living creatures ought to be so far generalised that it would be impossible to distinguish between a man and a horse, or between a camel and a cow. The utmost achievement of apparent carelessness is in the squinting and dislocated figures of Turner, yet he drew them as well as his buildings, and even observed such minute distinctions as those of rank, sex, and occupation. His little people, more numerous than was absolutely necessary, are all, in a strange sort of way, alive. He had a far more artistic manner of dealing with the figure than Claude, who handed over the task to laborious but unintelligent craftsmen, thereby introducing a foreign, and as we now say, a Philistine element into his pictures, in no wise conducive to their unity. The Turnerian figures seldom interfere with the unity of a work. They are sometimes harmful in other ways, particularly when important enough to occupy more space than they deserve.

An appearance of carelessness and sacrifice is often desirable in landscape figures, in order that it may seem as if the artist had not given them much thought. This is the same in principle as the apparently easy and careless way in which a writer who knows his craft will seem to make

cursory allusions to subordinate topics, though they may have occupied his closest attention, and taken quite a disproportionate part of his time. In all the arts there are legitimate deceptions, and in the case that now occupies us the deception is perfectly innocent. If the artist gets a little more reputation for readiness than that which he quite deserves, he does not receive all the credit due to him for careful and honest work. This, however, matters very little, as his object is the quality of his picture considered as a whole. I am told that much of what now passes for very vivacious and impromptu pen-drawing is wrought with calculated contrivance, and with the most careful selection of lines, on an elaborate foundation in lead-pencil.

The ideal of landscape figure-painting would be this. Suppose the case of a well-disciplined figure-painter taking a great interest in landscape, and painting landscapes in his maturity with figures placed easily where he wanted them. Such an artist would overcome at the same time the difficulties of too much labour and those of ignorance. I might mention both Rubens and Rembrandt as examples, but their landscape is hardly mature enough to be profitably imitated in the present day. Linnell is of our own time. His early practice was in portrait, and when he passed to landscape he retained a better knowledge of the figure than he would ever have acquired in the fields. The consequence was a complete freedom from all preoccupation about drawing, of which he had always enough for his purposes, and this left him at liberty to harmonise figures and landscapes both in texture and in colour.

With regard to the kind of study most suitable for the landscape-painter who wishes to put peasants in his fields, or the immortal angler by the purling stream, I may repeat the good advice once given me by a painter who kept one of the best known *ateliers* in Paris. "It will not be of so much use to you," he said, "to make finished studies from the model as to sketch from many points of view. Change your place frequently, go all round the model and work rapidly." The advice was excellent, and the practical criticism also, for the master paid strict attention to the chief proportions, without exacting much accuracy in detail. Unfortunately such a system of study is impossible in a crowded life-school, where every place is taken for the duration of the *pose*.

An almost sufficient education may be acquired by summary sketching from figures in pictures, especially if their expression depends more on gesture than on subtle movements of the face. Landscape figures must always act like marionettes in a pantomime hardly aided by eye or lip. There is room for dramatic talent in the grouping and action of the

marionettes. If the painter has some skill in modelling, he may make very helpful little figures in clay or wax, which give valuable suggestions both for grouping and illumination.

In matters of this kind, which are of secondary importance, human nature is not always strictly conscientious, and easily permits itself a plagiarism. This is one of those cases in which plagiarism is tacitly tolerated; the landscape-painter may take his figure where he pleases, provided that he makes it seem to be in its right place. This always implies adaptation, requiring only less ability than invention, and quite as much of the artistic sense of the congruous. No stolen figure ever looked right until it had been transformed.

Next to the pure artistic imagination, which is always sure to result in unity when it acts with vigour, the best advisers are local sympathy and the local sense. An eminent artist said that if he were watchful as he sat sketching the right figure was sure to come in sight before the sitting came to an end. Amongst the living inhabitants of the place to be sketched there are sure to be a few who by character and custom are entirely harmonised with it. The French rustic painters perceive this relation between life and locality, and set it forth with a simplicity which is one of the most admirable characteristics of their art.

CHAPTER II

OF RUSTIC LIFE

CONDITIONS of existence not in themselves favourable to the development of mind may yet be of enduring interest to the most powerful and the most cultivated intellects. If it seems surprising that this should be so, we have only to consider how much care and pains have been devoted by powerful minds to the study of lower animals, even down to the intelligence of insects and the habits of creatures much below insects in the scale of nature. We may descend lower still and yet find matter to interest the best of us in such a science as geology, where the substances to be compared are all inanimate, whilst their revelation of past existences, in fossils, does not include any creature equal to the lowest types of humanity. And when we come to the sciences of chemistry and astronomy, we find ourselves in regions where every star and atom obeys natural laws with the most absolute regularity, because it has not the degrees of intelligence that would be necessary to set itself in wilful rebellion against them. Yet no one despises chemists and astronomers as mindless because the subjects of their studies are without mind.

It may seem a waste of time to prove that the art that represents rustic life may be followed by men of high intelligence and even genius, yet I have heard the question argued against such art in a way that deserves reply, because the argument is likely to crop up again, as all arguments do which are suggested by the nature of things. It is said that painting which represents highly cultivated and highly civilised people, that is, well educated ladies and gentlemen, is of a higher class than that which exhibits nothing better than a peasantry and the monotonous occupations of practical agriculture. As there is more wit and culture in a drawing-room than in the common room of a farm-house, it is assumed that there must be more of both in the art that represents the drawing-room than in the other art which interests itself in a winter evening at the farm, as such evenings are

passed amongst a genuine peasantry remote from the light and luxury of the urban middle classes. The fallacy lies in a confusion between the intelligence of the subjects or models and the intelligence required to represent them, and besides this, it overlooks something that is not precisely intelligence, but a sense or instinct that we call the artistic gift. It may happen that this peculiar gift finds more to interest and occupy it in the daily lives of peasants than in those of the nobility and gentry, and it may happen, further, that even amongst rustics themselves the artist, guided by his special instinct, may prefer a peasantry that lags behind the modern arts of agriculture and life to one that has advanced along with them and kept abreast of the age in which we live. The genuine artistic instinct is so peculiar in its ways of selecting subjects of study, and the happiness of an artist in finding what suits him best is such a peculiar kind of happiness, so unlike every other, that there is a complete separation between his wisdom and the wisdom of the world. But I have dwelt enough upon generalities, and will come to a particular instance. We have good evidence that Jean François Millet was a man of superior intellect; we know it from his preferences in literature and from his private letters and memoranda. Here is a brief extract which may seem nothing to a clever journalist accustomed to produce brilliant writing in large quantities, but which affords good evidence of strong mental grasp.

"Things should not look as if they were brought together by accident, but they should have among themselves an intimate and necessary connection. I want the people I paint to look as if they were dedicated to their station—that it would be impossible for them to ever think of being anything but what they are. A work should be all of a piece, and people and things should be there for an end. I wish to put strongly and fully all that is neccessary, so much so that I think things weakly said had better not be said at all, because they are, in a manner, deflowered and spoiled;[1] but I profess the greatest horror of uselessness (however brilliant) and filling up. This can have no result but to take off the attention and weaken the whole."

This paragraph contains a clear statement of three ideas—the necessity of composition, the need for unity in character, and the value of force in execution. It ends with a protest against the intrusion of superfluous details. Now, of these ideas there is only one that a commonplace mind would have insisted upon, and that is force in execution. The strong desire for unity in character and purpose, implying the exclusion of unnecessary details, "however brilliant," is the mark of a superior intellect.

[1] What an excellent maxim this would be for all who work in literature!

It may seem strange that a mind sufficiently elevated to have expressed itself in the paragraph just quoted could have found contentment in the unceasing study of a kind of life which, whatever else it may be, is utterly unintellectual. But the paragraph itself contains the key to Millet's interest in the peasantry. He says, "I want the people I paint to look as if they were dedicated to their station—that it would be impossible for them to ever think of being anything but what they are." This is exactly the characteristic of a true peasantry. The class lives its own life, and is uninfluenced by any other class.

Each separate picture by Millet gives one phase of peasant life, completely separated and detached not only from other kinds of life, but from all other phases of rustic existence itself. His people are so much occupied with the business they have in hand that they have not liberty of mind enough for any kind of momentary diversion. The artist was deeply impressed by the deadening monotony of rural toil, and marked his sympathy by a pervading seriousness that does not exactly answer to the reality, or that only answers to the gravest aspects of reality. "The gay side never shows itself to me," Millet said in a letter to his friend M. Sensier. "I do not know where it is. I have never seen it. The gayest thing I know is the calm, the silence which is so sweet, either in the forest or in the cultivated land—whether the land be good for culture or not. You will admit that it is always very dreamy, and a sad dream, though often very delicious."

"You are sitting under a tree, enjoying all the comfort and quiet of which you are capable; you see come from a narrow path a poor creature loaded with fagots. The unexpected and always surprising way in which this figure strikes you instantly reminds you of the common and melancholy lot of humanity—weariness."

"Sometimes, in places where the land is sterile, you see figures hoeing and digging. From time to time one raises himself and straightens his back, as they call it, wiping his forehead with the back of his hand. 'Thou shalt eat thy bread in the sweat of thy brow.' Is this the gay, jovial work some people would have us believe in? But, nevertheless, to me it is true humanity and great poetry!"

The reader has noticed the plain statement that Millet had never seen the gay side of rustic life, and did not know where it was. It may strike different observers differently. My own surprise has always been that the French peasants could remain as cheerful as I have known them in a life of labour and privation. That they do certainly retain a fund of cheerfulness is proved by the way in which it bursts forth in merriment when the

occasion seems propitious. Here is a very good example, because it is not taken from a single village only. When the vintage is about to begin in Burgundy the poorer class of country people go down by hundreds from the hills. They often walk all night, and it is their constant custom to beguile the way with songs and jests and laughter. They are so cheerful, and bear the fatigue in such a good-humoured manner, that many a dull rich traveller, boxed up in the solemn dignity of a carriage, might envy them if he considered mental happiness preferable to physical ease. And if he had charity enough to offer a seat to one or two of the weaker members of the party, he might be surprised to discover that they look upon the entire pilgrimage as a pleasure trip. I am speaking now of what I know quite as well as Millet knew his melancholy models at Barbizon, and I fail to see how it would be possible for hundreds of the poorest country folks to become suddenly capable of heroic optimism if their spirits were habitually depressed. I have known a few peasants who were gloomy, but always for some definite reason, such as ill-health or special pecuniary anxieties; the great majority were cheerful and inclined to be quietly humorous. M. André Theuriet, the novelist, who knows the peasantry well, considers them far happier in early life than the inhabitants of towns, and also happier and more natural in all that relates to courtship and marriage, but after marriage their life is hard, he thinks, on account of the constant necessity for hard work, and the endless succession of cares imposed by the management of a farm. I may supplement this by observing that the work itself varies very much in pressure and intensity, that at certain times the peasant has relatively what would be leisure if he knew how to profit by it, whilst at others his toil is excessive. But I have never observed that the times of his hardest work were his least cheerful times; on the contrary, he is never more cheerful than during harvest, when he works without moderation in the full glare of a southern sun, and after sunset as long as he can see.[1]

In his gloomy view of peasant life Millet entirely left out of account its not infrequent opportunities for convivial enjoyment, the pleasure of which is enhanced to a degree that we can hardly realise by the austere temperance of every-day existence. If it were limited to occasional private indulgence in the pleasures of the table, indulgence in the peasant's own

[1] There is far more variety in peasant life than is commonly believed. The mere changes of the seasons and of the weather are enough of themselves to give an interest continually renewed, as the wind does to the captain of a sailing vessel. The peasant, too, has an interest in the growth and ripening of his crops, which is unknown not only to the sailor who ploughs the barren expanse of salt-water, but to the citizens who fancy that street pavements are incomparably more beautiful and entertaining.

THE GLEANERS

Painted by J. F. Millet

Etched by B. Damman

Having written at length about Millet in the text I need not speak of him here. This picture was painted in 1856 in the midst of the greatest pecuniary distress and exhibited at the Salon of 1857, where it was appreciated by some, and helped to found his reputation. The first sale of this picture is not mentioned in Sensier's *Life of Millet*, but in 1858 a M. Letrône sent five pictures by Millet to auction, and they fetched ridiculously low prices. This sale, says his biographer, "discouraged Millet about his future pictures, his embarrassments increased; he was driven to death." Yet he had painted "The Gleaners" and "The Angelus," which have since fetched between thirty and forty thousand pounds, of which "The Gleaners" represents nearly fourteen thousand. And the man who had created these treasures could scarcely buy the plainest food for his family, and only refrained from suicide because he was convinced that it was morally wrong.

Sic vos non vobis mellificatis apes.

Peint par J F Millet

Imp. Wittmann

Gravé par Ben. Damman.

home, it would be far less enjoyable than it is. Every wedding in a farm-house brings together a very large party, and they eat and drink without stint for two or three days together. The preparations for such a feast are on a scale to remind one of Homer or Rabelais—that is for meat, poultry, and wine, vegetables being carefully excluded as beneath the dignity of the occasion. But the peasant is not dependent on weddings for the chance of a drink or a dinner. Every market-day he drives to the nearest town and meets his friends and acquaintances, and they do not neglect the opportunity for a feast and a bottle. One has only to walk on the high-road on a market-day to meet hundreds of spring-carts, many with swift horses driven at high speed, and all occupied by healthy and cheerful country folks. I once heard a French lady expressing pessimistic views on the distribution of happiness amongst mankind, so I recommended her to meet the peasants going to a fair and look in their faces for an answer.

On one point I am almost (not quite) able to agree with Millet, and that is about the sadness of old age amongst the peasantry. I have known one or two happy and cheerful old people, but as a rule they are not happy, being too heavily and grievously oppressed with a sense of their uselessness, so that they wish to die, and the vigorous younger people talk of their probable end quite calmly in their presence. When at last it happens the event causes little or no emotion ; the useless old person is carried away to the churchyard, followed by a troop of men talking about the crops. This is the sad end of peasant life, yet the view of death as a release from suffering and uselessness may be as rational as any other. It is not sentimental, but are we any wiser in our grief for the old and the weary who have gone to their rest, and is not the grief itself in many cases assumed merely because we think it dutiful and becoming to assume it ?

Two conditions are necessary for a peasantry worth the serious attention of a painter. It must have a visible simplicity and unity in all its belongings, and there must be a certain social harmony amongst the people who may be brought together in the same picture. As to this I am speaking, of course, from the artistic point of view. The people may hate each other and quarrel, but they must be, in all their ideas and customs, of the same peasant caste and class. They must have its "common consciousness" and no other. This must be seen, too, in everything they purchase or select ; it must be seen in their animals and all the material objects that belong to them. The *peasant sense* is already beginning to be difficult to find, at least in its completeness and perfection. The true peasant's cottage is rapidly giving place to the neat angular building with blue slate. Things are bought in the towns which are not in harmony

with the old furniture. In every town there are shops for the sale of agricultural implements, neat and ingenious inventions in steel and iron, and the peasants frequently buy them. After that what becomes of the artistic unity of the farm? Another kind of unity, that of ideas, is broken down by the invasion of education. It is needless to disguise the fact that the harmony of the old peasant life was founded on the general possession of a rudimentary agricultural knowledge, and on the general ignorance of everything else. Whatever may be said in favour of knowledge and its advantages (and of these every author must be acutely sensible) it becomes more evident, as the effects of popular education are more visible, that certain simple, yet strong and respectable, types of character are not compatible with much knowledge, that they reach their own peculiar perfection when sheltered by ignorance, but never otherwise. The perfect peasant is ignorant as a condition of his perfection in his own order. Give him the moderate degree of knowledge possessed by a bachelor of letters, and you spoil him for the life of his fathers. It was a sure instinct in Millet to want his peasants to look "as if it would be impossible for them to ever think of being anything but what they are."

The difficulty of dealing with an ignorant and quite unintellectual class is very much smaller in the graphic arts than it is in literature. We have few novels in the English language founded entirely on the study of rustic life; our novelists give us occasional glimpses of rusticity, but find it practically more convenient to take the reader back to the educated classes after a short visit to the cottage or the farm. The difficulty is to make uneducated people talk, except in the plain and simple narrative of events that have taken place, or the artless utterance of their feelings. As the painter's peasants are all dumb, and express themselves only by action, this difficulty does not exist for him, so that painting is a more convenient art than literature for the representation of a peasant class. There are only two ways of getting over this difficulty in the art of the novelist, one is by making the stories short and dependent upon narrative interest, generally tragic, avoiding long conversations; the other is by lifting the whole subject, as George Sand used to do, out of the real world, and placing it unhesitatingly in the ideal. A converse truth in criticism is that for the representation of classes that are better educated but not visibly picturesque—our professional classes, for example — it is better to choose the literary art than the pictorial.

Of the three countries where I have known rustic life closely and intimately—England, Scotland, and France—it is in France only that I have seen a peasant class in its perfection—that is, living like a separate

nation within a nation by the guidance of its own inherited customs and traditions. And I have been an eye-witness and close observer of the fatal, inevitable change which is now quickly destroying the special characteristics of the class, and mingling it with the general French democracy. Now, before the change had begun to operate, the peasant life, both in the fields and in the cottage, was always eminently paintable; and if we inquire how and why it was more paintable than the life of another class, such as the aristocracy in the country or the *bourgeoisie* in the towns, we find that the forms and colours of things were, from an artist's point of view, better and more harmonious. They all sprang from minds of the same order, of the same tastes and education; there was a common consciousness that produced in all things a sort of *style*, not comparable for richness and splendour to what we call the styles of architecture and ornament, but as consistent as any one of them, and having a charm that they cannot have in a certain nearness to nature, so that the farmer and his things belonged to the landscape, and had not simply come there like navvies making a railway. If we inquire how it is that the thatched roof is better than the slated roof, we find that it has more variety of form in its undulations and its irregular sky-line, that its colour is richer and more various, both in the grays and yellows of the old and new straw, and in the natural adornment of the various mosses and graminæ that so readily plant themselves upon it. The roof, too, often projected beyond the wall, and gave a fine breadth of shade in the glare of summer, and the wall itself had its recesses darker and cooler still. The slate roof is neat and trim all round, it has no undulations, no variety of colour, and its sky-line seems drawn with a ruler. Inside, the old farmhouse was lighted chiefly from the open door, the windows were small and insufficient. The consequence was a fine concentration of effects of light and colour amongst the rich browns of the well-polished oak and walnut furniture, the dark, low ceiling, the umber walls, the green or scarlet coverlets of the beds. There was in those days absolutely nothing to spoil such an interior for an artist. The fire-place was disfigured by no cast-iron abominations; there were no stoves or stove-pipes, only a pair of fire-dogs carried the smouldering wood. The modern interior is brighter and warmer. Light from one or more large windows strikes on the bare white walls, and there is a cast-iron stove. The first would have been a good subject for Rembrandt, the second is only paintable by workmen who are ready to paint anything, even a schoolroom or a barrack. In the old-fashioned peasant's farm-yard rested his waggons, ploughs, and other farming gear, made by a wheelwright of his own class, and never painted or housed. The wood, so long as it lasted, took upon

itself a beautiful quiet gray colour; its angles were softened and its texture became pleasant to the eye; the ironwork of course rusted, and became rich in ochreous reds and yellows. The work of the country wheelwright was heavy and a little rude, but it satisfied the first of artistic requirements, that a thing should not only *be* but *look* strong enough for the work it has to do. The modern scientific agricultural implement is all iron or steel, it looks meagre, its lines are hard, all its angles sharp, and it is painted a bright blue or red. Practically it is serviceable, and it may be introduced into a bad matter-of-fact scientific picture of the present day, but no great master would have attempted to represent such a thing even in a study, still less would he have admitted it into a work of art. For costume, again, even in those parts of France which have not a brilliant traditional costume, like that still worn in Brittany, the peasant's dress was always paintable—good in its coarse textures, good in its warm whites and faded blues against the rich natural colouring of his sunburnt skin. As he walked by the side of his powerful oxen there was nothing more incongruous in his simple costume than in their primitive, antiquated harness. All his accoutrements and theirs had been made in the village; there was straw for their comfort under their smooth wooden yokes; there was straw for his comfort in his wooden shoes. All day long he followed them, as in Rosa Bonheur's well-known picture of "Ploughing in the Nivernais," making endless combinations with the cheerful landscape and its distance of hill and woodland. In exchange for this the improvements of modern agriculture offer us two mechanics and a steam-plough, with a middle-class overseer coming from time to time to see how the work is getting on.[1]

It is wonderful how the old peasant ways keep their superiority for artistic purposes even in their least favourable aspects. Out in the open air they had all the advantages of sunshine, but how was it in the winter evenings, in the homes where there were no books, no newspapers, hardly any light, and very little conversation? The reader will please to bear in mind that the intellectual pleasures are of slight importance in a picture, that books and newspapers are not especially paintable objects, and that conversation, whether interesting or not, remains unheard. With the

[1] Painters are now beginning to try what can be done with steam implements. One of the first attempts was a picture by Rafael Correa in the Universal Exhibition of 1889, in which we have a steam-engine in a field, but he got over the difficulty in some measure by a picturesque thatch over his engine, which gave it rather a rustic appearance. There is now a quite recent realistic and scientific school that has no objection to anything visible, and, having no æsthetic preferences or repugnances, is as ready to paint a steam-engine as anything else. All that can be said about this school is that its labours, however faithful as to matters of fact, lie, in reality, entirely outside of the fine arts, and therefore do not concern us, as they have nothing to do with the questions and problems in which, as students of art, we take an interest.

progress of knowledge peasants will sit reading newspapers in rooms brilliantly lighted by petroleum, or perhaps by electricity, when they will be as paintable as subscribers in the newsroom of a mechanics' institute. The old-fashioned way was this. There was the wood-fire upon the hearth, maintained by pushing two stout branches to keep their ends together as they consumed; and there was an oil-lamp, requiring rather frequent trimming, the wick burning exactly as in the lamps of the ancient Romans. Here was at least a relative comfort when the snow was thick outside, and by this imperfect light the men sat peeling hemp and the women spinning, the old grandmother in the chimney-corner doing nothing, the dogs constantly trying to edge their way to the fire, and being as regularly repulsed. Such a scene may not represent the height of material luxury or intellectual civilisation, but it is so completely paintable that an adequate picture of it might adorn the genteelest residences. Even the imperfection of the light does but give breadth and value to the shadows. There is a drawing of such a winter's evening by Lhermitte, called "The Spinners," which is as good a subject for light in the midst of gloom as any selected by Rembrandt.

It is fortunate for coming generations that the pictorial quality of genuine peasant life was recognised by French artists of strong natural genius and good acquired training just before it began to pass away. Troyon, the Bonheurs, Jules Breton, Millet, Edouard Frère, Courbet, Bastien Lepage, and now Lhermitte, with many other sincere observers of less general celebrity, have left records of it that will have both an artistic and a social interest for future ages.

Jules Breton, who is a good authority on the subject, declares that the whole school of truthful painters of peasant life descends directly from the landscape-painters, and he traces it to the Dutch of the seventeenth century. The French landscape-painters, coming after the conventional work of the First Empire and the Restoration, rediscovered the existence of nature, and they associated it with cattle and figures. If I mention the cattle first, it is because in landscape-painting, from their size and colour, they are really more important than their owners. However, the owners were painted truly up to a certain point—that is, as secondary objects—and then gradually they attracted more and more of the painter's attention, till finally it appeared that a sentimental or poetical interest might be attached to them, as in the works of Millet, and that there was a certain melancholy dignity in rustic labour, especially that of the women, as Jules Breton has shown us. He being one of the few painters who have expressed themselves with the pen gives me the opportunity for a quotation. The passage cannot be translated.

"L'ensemble sombre que formaient les gens et les choses, où glissaient encore quelques lueurs d'or, se détachait avec une prestigieuse puissance du ciel safrané et des flammes mourantes irradiant derrière la vigueur des chaumes."

"De grandes filles brunes passaient, gardant encore, dans leurs cheveux emmêlés, des ardeurs du jour attardées en auréoles et cernant d'un fil clair leurs silhouettes diffuses. Elles semblaient plus belles et plus graves dans le sombre mystère du crépuscule, avec leurs faucilles où de froids éclats de ciel luisaient comme des lueurs de lune."

The same painter and poet who wrote this admirable description was one of the first to show the connection between rustic life and the ancient forms of religion. In his picture, "La Bénédiction des Blés," which has given an inspiration to so many imitators, Jules Breton made us the spectators of a priestly procession winding through the pathways of the fields, a ceremony to which old and pious beliefs assign some virtue and efficacy in causing an abundant harvest. Here, again, the old rustic ways are wholly on the side of art. The priest walks in state beneath a canopy, wearing his splendid cope, and bearing in his hands the glittering monstrance that contains what the kneeling peasants are worshipping as divine. In their view—and it is not a mere rustic superstition, but an opinion held by the most learned theologians of the most powerful Church on earth—the priest does actually carry God into the fields which He has made. The religious belief, centuries old, the variety of shape and colour in the ecclesiastical vestments, from golden priest to scarlet and white choristers, and the more sober but still valuable colouring of the peasant costumes, contribute two elements of interest, poetical and pictorial, that are entirely absent from a scientific visit of observation. When the old belief shall have passed away nothing will remain but an inspection by an authority from an agricultural college, with accurate notes of the year's meteorology in his pocket. His prognostication may be valuable, but how is it to be painted? His science will be invisible; the religious procession is a festival for the eyes.

I began this chapter with France and the present century, because it was the most convenient way of getting speedily to the heart of the subject. Any one who understands the best French rustic painters knows all the conditions of rustic art, and after that he may easily see whether they are found in equal perfection elsewhere. The two main conditions are a well-trained school of artists and a perfectly genuine and picturesque peasantry. A moment's reflection will convince the reader that the two are very unlikely to be found together. You want the artistic culture of Paris, and

the backwardness of a traditional rural class, as yet quite unspoiled by the modern scientific and industrial spirit. But in modern times science and art are scarcely separable in that way. The same great exhibitions that contain pictures by modern artists contain the most recent machinery of the most advanced mechanical agriculture, and the changes to be brought about by its adoption must inevitably destroy the genuine peasant life. It comes, therefore, to a question of a few years on one side or the other. If the industrial progress precedes the artistic, the well-trained painters will be too late; the peasant life will be already a thing of the past at the time of their arrival. This actually happened in the county of Lancaster. Manchester is an artistic centre, and Liverpool is another. The fine arts are practised and appreciated in both, but this kind of education came in the wake of successful manufacturing which had filled the valleys with mills and rows of cottages, and connected them by high-roads and railways. All these things are so perilous to the simplicity of mind and fixity of custom which are the marks of a true rural community, that it can hardly continue to exist in their neighbourhood, so that when country life in Lancashire was worth painting there was nobody to paint it, and now that there are artists it has become suburban. I need hardly add the expression of a regret that there is no pictorial record of a past that would have been interesting in widely different ways. There is evidence in the indigenous domestic architecture and carved furniture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that the rural life of Lancashire was not unpicturesque before the introduction of steam, and as the race of men was one of the finest in England, and the scenery in many parts of the county by no means dull or commonplace, Lancashire might have had a rustic school of painting if there had been the necessary degree of artistic preparation. The fever of industrialism in the nineteenth century swept away the quieter and simpler life of our forefathers, and substituted for it a new kind of existence favourable to the development of intelligence, but destructive of ancient peace. The old life was essentially rural, though there were many little towns; the new life is essentially urban, though grass still grows in the rich green meadows, and the heather still blooms on the moorland.

In all the countries of modern Europe where painting is now practised we find more or less skilful representations of peasant life, but it is very difficult to judge of their fidelity without knowing the peasantry of those countries, so that one is reduced to the necessity of estimating the pictures simply as works of art. From this point of view I may say that when the object of the artist is to give a very elaborate representation of such things as ornamental peasant costumes and carved furniture, rather than simply to

make a good picture, his work seems always sure to fall into an inferior class. For example, I remember some pictures of Alsatian and Breton interiors on such occasions as a wedding feast, when the peasants don all their finery, and the artist patiently sits down to imitate the whole of it, with the texture and ornaments of the great presses or the beds. In these pictures the human interest becomes secondary to a toilsome study of still-life, and for my part I find no pictures so fatiguing. The simplicity of Millet belongs to a far higher range of artistic thought and conception. Whilst an artist of second or third-rate intellect might be attracted by very elaborate costumes, such as those worn on festive occasions by the Breton peasants, a truly great painter would rather be tempted to keep clear of them, or if he represented them at all, it would be by a slight and suggestive rather than a painfully imitative execution. This opinion may perhaps seem arbitrary to the reader; he may think that it has no better foundation than a personal antipathy to certain high-wrought pictures that another critic, with equal reason, might extol. No, it is an opinion founded both on the nature of the artistic intellect and on the history of art. When a painter can bestow weeks of labour on copying unnecessary pins and buttons, and trimmings of jackets, and absurd edifices of head-dresses, merely because they are quaint, curious, and irrational, it is good evidence that his own mind is not powerful enough to sweep all these gewgaws aside, and occupy itself with something serious. And as for the history of art, the patient elaboration of ornament in the graphic arts belongs invariably to their earlier stages. It was possible for mediæval illuminators—it was possible even for Van Eyck — it was not possible for Correggio or Velasquez.[1]

There is at least this good in peasant costumes, that they indicate a certain degree of material prosperity. A pauper peasantry cannot indulge in such luxuries. This consideration is, however, rather social than artistic, as artists find a pathos in extreme poverty which is wanting to every condition of life that rises visibly above it. Israels, the modern painter of the poor, would scarcely have touched our hearts if his peasants had been brave in velvet and embroidery. Some touching pictures of humble life in the Highlands of Scotland have been painted by English and Scotch artists, and in all of these the poverty of the interiors has been an essential element of success. The artistic inferiority of humble life in the Highlands

[1] The elaborate costumes of the Breton peasantry are often extravagantly expensive. This extravagance co-exists with extreme parsimony in expenditure for knowledge, cleanliness, and health, all which are a much better investment than mere finery. Brilliant and expensive costumes indicate a certain degree of civilisation, because they cannot exist without skill in the minor arts, but a civilisation that cannot get beyond them is an arrested civilisation.

THE BACKGAMMON PLAYERS

PAINTED BY DAVID TENIERS (the younger)

ETCHED BY C. O. MURRAY

(*National Gallery*)

A PICTURE of ordinary Dutch life in the time of the artist; that is, in the seventeenth century. No doubt the scene had been faithfully observed, but there is what seems to us rather a contradiction. The table with its cloth and the backgammon board, and at least one of the two players, appear to belong to a higher order of things than the other objects and people in the room. It may be a wayside inn where a backgammon board is kept for the amusement of occasional guests, but where most of the customers are simple peasants like those warming themselves at the fire. There is no real comfort in the place except that good blaze and a pipe.

is not so much in its poverty as in the lack of variety, its elements are so few and simple that they continually recur. It is difficult to get much variety out of the usual Highland cottage—four gray walls with a door and a little window, the whole simply covered with a thatched roof shorn close above the wall. As a contrast to this I remember some French farm-buildings, now unhappily removed to make way for a modern erection. The projecting thatch gave deep cool shadows, and there were dormer windows in it, the lines of it being full of unexpected curves. The walls of the houses had their projections and recesses, round the windows and doors there were some good fifteenth-century mouldings, and a vine went wandering over them.

I agree with M. Jules Breton in the belief that modern rustic art is derived from landscape, and I see little or no connection, even in Holland itself, between this modern art and that Dutch painting of the seventeenth century which remains the monument of a past perfection to be admired for its own qualities, but not imitated by our contemporaries who were born under different influences. The chief reason why the famous old Dutch masters have so little influence on modern rustic art is probably in the superficial nature of its sympathy with the life and labour of the peasantry. The Dutch masters looked upon the pleasures and recreations of the country people with an eye that was not unfriendly; the painters seem to have thought it only natural that boors should be a little besotted, that they should drink and smoke more than was good for them at the ale-house, and indulge in gambols, not always either elegant or moral, with free and fat women at a fair. It seemed more cheerful to paint the boor in his hours of idleness than in the longer and wearier hours of toil. The Dutchmen took the lighter side of peasant life, as Millet, long afterwards, took the serious. Then comes the ultra-refinement of modern criticism to which the boors of the seventeenth century appear lamentably sensual and degraded little beings, "like a beast with lower pleasures" than ours, "like a beast with lower pains." How should a modern professor of æsthetics, with the learning of a scholar and the delicacy of a lady, ever associate with these creatures, even in imagination?

A more genial and indulgent view of life and art would take the "Dutch drolleries," as our great-grandfathers used to call them, for a record of the recreative side of a life that must have been, in its hard reality, laborious. It was not by smoking and drinking in low taverns that the most artificial country in the world can ever have been made and maintained. These are but the relaxations of a most energetic and strenuous race. And as for the sensuality revealed in the Dutch pictures, the real objection to it is its

inelegance, its want of conformity to the manners rather than the morals of polite society. The besotted boor drinks and smokes, which is done at our clubs, and he puts his arm round a woman's waist, which is done more regularly in our ball-rooms. Sometimes he plays at cards on a tub turned upside down; our leaders of society play cards also, but their tables are better made and their stakes larger. There is no real objection to the boors immortalised by the marvellous Dutch genre-painters, except that they have the manners of their class in its hours of ease and recreation. Let us be thankful for the admirable care and fidelity with which the happier hours of rustic life have been preserved for us by these faithful eye-witnesses. It must have had its pathetic and even its tragic side as well, which they have rarely dwelt upon. The Dutch race is not demonstrative, and it may be that the visible expression of the deeper emotions was insufficient for the requirements of pictorial art, which values no sentiment unless it can be seen. I may take Adrian Van Ostade as a typical example. It is evident that he had a certain interest in peasant life, but his interest was more picturesque than dramatic. I do not remember amongst his etchings and pictures a single instance of profound sympathy with any mental suffering. Life always runs on quietly; a woman sits in the sunshine at her door winding thread, a man stops to speak to her, and these, with a cock and a chicken, are enough for a single composition. In another a smiling woman is at a window in full light, whilst behind her is an amorous swain in shadow, and that is all. Some of the best Ostades are scenes outside the village alehouse on a sunny afternoon, when the peasants sit and drink on the benches, and the itinerant fiddler stops to entertain them. Very likely he watched the village life himself from the alehouse bench. He saw the talkative gossips meet and chat, unconscious of the flight of time. Meanwhile a smoker rests his arm on his window-sill and pauses as he looks out, his pipe in one hand, his pot in the other, and he, too, is a sufficient subject for an etching. All this is really the outside of village life as any quiet observer may see it still, but it is only the outside. The most serious subject in Ostade's works that I remember is the etching called "The Grace"—that is, a peasant saying grace as he sits down with his wife and children to their one dish, which is put on a three-legged stool. The subject has often been treated since by artists with far greater pretensions to sentiment, but it may be doubted whether any of them has more completely expressed the idea of thankfulness for small mercies.

Although Ostade was intellectually inferior to Millet, having nothing of his poetry, these artists have two qualities in common, the persistent desire

HEAD OF AN OLD WOMAN

A Study in Chalk

Drawn by Frank Dicksee, A.R.A.

Reproduced in Photogravure by Annan and Swan

Old age is represented in this volume for the male sex by Rembrandt's etching, and for the female sex by this study. I chose it for its extreme truth, and also because it is very English, like Mr. Leslie's "Bedtime."

The purchaser gains by an accident. A plate was taken that I accepted as admissible but no more. Before printing the edition an accident happened to the first plate, so that it had to be replaced by a new one. Between the two a technical improvement had been introduced into the process, and the second plate is much superior to the first. It is one of the best reproductions I have seen.

for good composition, and the judgment that enabled them to make use of the most simple and commonplace materials. Beyond this it may be doubted whether there is any advantage in establishing the technical comparison once suggested by Fromentin to the disadvantage of Millet. It may be truly said that the Dutchman lives more by his technical perfection than by his human interest, whilst the Frenchman has immortalised himself by a sentiment. In both cases, however truthful the works may seem, there is much more than the bare truth.

It may be taken as a general rule, governing all the old Dutch painting of pastoral life in the fields themselves, that the animals are at least as important as the men and women, and that there is seldom any intelligence in either. The character of all that pastoral art is best expressed by the single substantive *placidity*. It is a land of peace—the peace of ruminating cattle, the peace of a fine summer afternoon in a green meadow—and in all that pastoral art there is never any sublimity either in human or animal life, or in the landscape that surrounds it. So tranquil is the life of Paul Potter's herdsmen that there seems no reason why it should ever have worn itself out. Are they not still watching calmly in the verdant polders of Holland, as they do in the pictures and etchings, exempt from every care but that of their well-fed kine?

CHAPTER III

TECHNICAL CONDITIONS OF BUCOLIC ART

EVERY class of subject has a persistent influence on technical practice, especially on the selection of processes. The artist is led to adopt a process, or warned to avoid it, less by its general reputation than by its adaptibility to the particular work he has to do. Afterwards the process itself reacts upon the artist in this way, that it attaches him more and more to those subjects for which it is best adapted, and therefore for which it offers the most seductive and alluring facilities.

One of the best examples has been the interchange of influences between water-colour and the study of landscape. Water-colour was found convenient for that kind of subject, and so the art developed itself to a high degree of technical perfection. The needs of the landscape-painter made water-colour what it is. It might also be maintained that water-colour has made landscape-painting what it is by encouraging artists to attempt the most evanescent effects. And if we ask how water-colour, more than oil, has led artists in this direction, we arrive at reasons of a purely technical order, especially these two, that water-colour dries rapidly and can be carried easily.

Here, then, we have a case in which the selection of a class of subjects in nature has led to the practice of a particular art, and this art, in turn, has led to the study of nature, and to a kind of study which would hardly have been pursued without it.

The choice of bucolic subjects has had an influence both on the plastic and the graphic arts.

In sculpture it encourages work in bronze rather than in marble, as animals may be in a certain sense more truthfully represented in bronze—that is, with less conventionalism and a nearer approach to truth of texture in their coats. Bronze permits also a greater liberty of action in the animals represented without artificial supports, and the dress of peasants may be imitated in bronze with greater apparent lightness.

The reaction produced on the art of sculpture by the employment of bronze for bucolic subjects has been steadily in favour of naturalism and the picturesque. There is the same close connection between modern bucolic sculpture in bronze and the modern bucolic painting of Troyon, Rosa Bonheur, and Charles Jacque, that there is between classical sculpture in marble and the painting of Ingres.

(I need hardly observe that when we speak of sculpture in bronze the expression is used for convenience only, and is inaccurate. There is no sculpture in bronze except the mere finishing of a cast. What we call sculpture generally is in fact nothing more than modelling in some plastic material—that is, in some material, such as clay or wax, that can be easily moulded into a desired shape which it will afterwards retain. The real distinction is in different ways of modelling with a view to the substance of which the statue or group is to be ultimately made. The work in marble is, however, a piece of carving, whilst that in bronze is only a cast; the marble is usually a carved copy, finished perhaps by the original artist; the bronze only metal run into a mould.)

Bucolic subjects always have a tendency to impel all the fine arts, whether graphic or plastic, in the direction of simple naturalism, but as it is found in practice that naturalism in the treatment of these subjects is not convenient when marble is the substance employed, the consequence is that sculptors in marble are constantly thrown back upon idealism as their only resource, so that, although pastoral art sends the artist to nature, the mere use of marble is in itself enough to send him, in a certain sense, away from nature. I may explain this more clearly by an example.

In the Salon of 1890 there was a remarkable statue of colossal size, in gray marble, representing a man digging. The sculptor, M. Alfred Boucher, called his work simply "A la Terre," suggesting the abstract idea of Man labouring in agriculture. If, therefore, I say that by the use of marble M. Boucher was driven away from nature, I do not mean that he had not studied nature to produce his statue, which gave evidence of careful observation of the nude, but I mean that he did not represent the reality of life as we see it. He represented simply Man—not a French or German peasant, or an English labourer, but Man without any localisation in space or time, dateless, like a wave of the ocean or a cloud in the sky. There is a certain kind of truth in the abstract statement "Man digs," or "Man has dug," but which of us has ever seen a man digging without some kind of shoe upon his foot to protect it from the iron of the spade? And who has ever seen a man digging without some clothing on his back or legs that would give a clue to his nationality and his class? M. Boucher's man is

an ideal labourer with a magnificent muscular development, yet there is an inconsistency in the ideal, for he belongs to an age that uses iron tools without having attained to clothing. He is Adam before the fig-leaf, who has been to an ironmonger's shop.

I have taken the trouble, for the satisfaction of my own curiosity, of making a list of modern marble statues representing bucolic subjects. It is, of course, very incomplete, especially because for my present purpose I required either sketches or photographs or my own clear recollection of the statues themselves, yet notwithstanding its incompleteness it has confirmed me in the belief that the use of marble has a tendency to drive artists away from concrete reality into a region of abstraction. In these statues almost all the occupations of agricultural or purely pastoral life are followed by men in a state of nudity. The naked mower wields his scythe, the naked ploughman pauses for a rest, the naked shepherd blows his horn, or runs courageously, armed only with his crook, to defend his sheep against the ravening wolf. When he shears his sheep he has no clothing but the bits of wool that fall upon his smooth, bare limbs. Armed with a pickaxe, the naked labourer of future ages discovers a relic of what is for us the present. Who does not see that all this nudity is untrue as a representation of the realities of life, that it is only permitted to the artist by a convention that takes account of the temptations offered by marble (it always tempts men to the nude), and of its practical difficulties? In real life the nude is very rarely seen; it is never seen in the ordinary works of agriculture. I sometimes observe naked figures in fine action when men ride horses into the river, and good brown muscular figures, naked to the waist, amongst men who unload barges, or fetch sand up from the river's bed, but these are almost the only examples visible in the open air. Farm-labourers are invariably clothed.

To object seriously to this untrue nudity in sculpture would be a sure sign of Philistinism. We may take note of it as a matter of fact; we may perceive that bronze is more favourable to naturalism than marble, without hostility to the sculptor's way of translating what he sees into what he believes to be the higher forms of art. In an age of commonplace realism like the present it is well for the public mind that it should be occasionally invited to enter an ideal world where human life and human labour are presented in abstract forms—that is to say, in forms disengaged from the details that accompany reality. The full beauty of action is seen only when the figure is naked. We do not know the manly beauty of the mower's stride—arms, chest, and legs all acting powerfully together—until we have seen it in a statue. And independently of physical beauty, the presenta-

tion of common labours with the abstraction of ideal sculpture lifts them, morally, to a higher plane. In real life their true dignity is obscured by the interference of trivial and insignificant details; in ideal art these are suppressed, and we see the action in itself.

It may be observed that simple realism is more compatible with the bas-relief than with the statue, as the bas-relief approaches more to the nature of the picture, or, at least, of the engraving. Scenes of peasant life have sometimes been represented in relief with the closest fidelity, even to such matters as the bad fit of a peasant's trousers, which would be enough in itself to spoil the limbs of an Apollo. A French sculptor, J. Baffier, is as truthful in works of this class as any contemporary realist in painting. In the statue simple realism is not enough; the statue of a peasant in wooden shoes, and exactly in one of his own attitudes, would be ridiculous; in a bas-relief he is only natural, and we immediately forget his lack of beauty in a friendly interest in his work. I am thinking of a bas-relief by M. Baffier exhibited in 1890, and representing a peasant and his wife feeding a calf in their cow-house. The charm of it consisted in its unpretending veracity as a work of art, and in the humble simplicity of the people represented, and their entire devotion to their employment. Yet all this veracity of representation and unity of purpose would have been insufficient for a marble statue.

The effect of bucolic studies on the technical art of painting has been to encourage the study of colour and texture rather than form, whilst the inducement which they offer to the constant study of nature has led painters to the discovery of many combinations of colour and light unknown to their more famous predecessors. The comparative neglect of form in rustic art placed the adherents of the classical school (always the school of form) in a position of latent or expressed hostility with regard to it. I myself have known adherents of the old classical faith who were indifferent to the rich variety of picturesque material that abounds in the rural districts of France, especially where oxen are employed, and not indifferent merely, but even contemptuous in their judgment of the eminent artists who had revealed it to the Parisian world. It seemed at first that an antagonism so decided must be the result of unreasoning prejudice, but on observing it more closely I found that it came rather from a severe discipline in classical form, which made all drawing appear ignorant if it did not exhibit classical culture and classical fastidiousness in the modulation of every line. The bucolic artist might reply that he put form enough into his peasants and his oxen if he drew them with fair correctness, without refining upon nature, and that he saw beauties of another kind in reality — beauties that the most

famous draughtsmen had always persistently overlooked. "Even Raphael himself," the bucolic artist might argue, "whose drawing you admit to be perfection, could not paint with any truth of texture the hair and horns of an ox, neither could he put the animal into a field, with a peasant beside him, in accurate relations of tone and colour with the ground and the distant woods. Not one of the great masters of formal drawing could have painted a rural scene correctly. Those illustrious men were far inferior to Rosa Bonheur in the art of setting a peasant down upon his own farm, surrounded by the living things and the landscape amongst which his days are passed. Your great Italian masters were so ignorant of external nature that the commonest bright day would utterly baffle them. Without mentioning the more subtle and delicate effects of nature, the existence of which they seem never to have suspected, they could not even paint the plain everyday summer sunshine of the Italian *campagna*."

All this is true to the letter. The great draughtsmen, in Italy and elsewhere, have gone through life with eyes closed to a thousand beauties that the modern rustic painter sees and values, and which are amongst the most precious elements of his art. The change is in fact due to the transference of the attention from one set of qualities to another. A peasantry does not present, or even suggest, that perfect form which may be attained by the idealisation of carefully-selected Italian models, unspoiled by labour; and the form, if it existed, would be in great measure concealed by the coarse and awkward costume of the inelegant rustic. What is a good leg in an ill-fitting trouser, or a well-shaped foot in a clumsy wooden shoe? To the caricaturist whose business it is to make rural life ridiculous, the bad tailoring and rude shoe-making are a constant pretext for satire; he magnifies their defects, and makes the peasant (who has other things to think of) ludicrous in his unconsciousness. The serious artist has to discover beauties even in this unpromising material, and he finds them in the tints and textures of the working dress—all the better for being worn and faded—in the sunshine on the brown hand, or the shadow from the broad brim of the old straw hat. He finds them in the folds of the thin blouse, or, if that is not worn, in the coarse shirt, so much better for not being crudely white, like the fine linen of a Parisian. All this is colour, light-and-shade, and texture; form is secondary here. For these qualities oil-painting is by far the best; its textures are far richer than those of fresco—richer even than modern water-colour. And rustic art has itself enriched oil-painting by impelling artists to the discovery of new resources and the development of new powers. Considered technically, the oil-painting of Raphael is an undeveloped art in comparison with that of Troyon, and the

twilight of Titian, however judiciously chosen for his purposes as a colourist, is a limited aspect of nature in comparison with all the hours of daylight, from dawn to dusk, in sunny or cloudy weather, in the pictures of Jules Breton or Rosa Bonheur.

In original engraving the technical effect of rural studies has been against the burin and in favour of the etching-needle. The same rule holds good in the work of the copyist engraver, whose less independent position makes him attempt to render some of the qualities of painting. Since the revival of etching it has been extensively used for the interpretation of rustic pictures, and translates their tones and textures with an acceptable degree of fidelity. Even before the acknowledged revival, at a time when etching was unknown to the public, it was already employed in composite engraving for such things as the dress of peasants and the coats of animals —never convenient material for the burin. The best way to understand the reluctance to employ the unaided burin for such subjects is to examine carefully some of the best old burin engravings representing subjects really adapted to that art, such as classical figures and draperies, with severe architecture, and then turn to those in which rustic scenes are attempted, such as "The Prodigal Son" by Dürer, or "The Milkwoman" by Lucas of Leyden. One sees at a glance that however well trained the engraver may be in the use of his burin, the result is always too stiff for the purposes of bucolic art; and if we carry our analysis to the degree of minuteness which makes these matters perfectly intelligible, we find the reason to be that the peasantry and their surroundings show too much picturesque detail to be followed by the purifying and simplifying line of the burin, whereas the nimbler etching-needle follows the sinuosities of picturesque detail with the utmost ease. Again, I cannot say that there is no texture in burin-work, because I know that its own textures are in their way both varied and beautiful—considered, that is to say, in themselves. But the textures given by the burin are never really natural. They may be agreeable to the eye, and may be *substituted* for the textures of a field or a farm-yard, but it is substitution and not imitation. You may like them better than nature; still, they are not natural. Etching, on the contrary, is in harmony with all rustic things. Its methods of execution do answer to the qualities and characteristics of all that belongs to a primitive agricultural life, which alone is suitable for painting. The etcher is at home in copying thatch, or rude masonry, or weather-worn implements of husbandry; he is at home, too, in the landscape—from the trees of the forest, where the lonely woodcutter has built his hut, to the foreground of massive earth turned over by the glittering ploughshare.

The reader has an opportunity for comparing the two arts in their interpretation of rustic subjects by referring to illustrations in the present volume. The reproduction by Amand-Durand of the engraving by Lucas of Leyden is a good example of original line-engraving applied to a rustic subject, a plate in which the engraver has done what was in his power to attain suppleness and variety of handling. The etching by M. Damman, after the famous picture by Millet, "The Gleaners," now in the Louvre, is enough to show the applicability of its own process to subjects of this class. It is surely evident that no line-engraving, however excellent in its own more abstract and more formal manner, could approach this etching for fidelity either to the style adopted by Millet, or to the kind of nature which he endeavoured to represent.

The love of pastoral subjects has done much, from the seventeenth century down to our own time, for the maintenance of etching, both as an independent and an auxiliary art. Millet etched a few original plates, exceedingly simple in method, and fine etchings have been made from his pictures by Waltner and others. Our English Samuel Palmer was technically opposed to Millet, as he proceeded by thoughtful elaboration, but no one had the bucolic sentiment, the sense of the poetry of rural life, more profoundly than he, and it was associated in his mind with an intense appreciation of the technical qualities of etching as an art which seemed to him well fitted to express his knowledge and feeling about rural things, from the ploughman following his oxen at the dawn, to the village of thatched homesteads, mysterious under the harvest moon.

Amongst arts which are now neglected, lithography deserves mention for its convenience in dealing with rustic materials of all kinds. The textures obtainable in lithography, and its adequate rendering of local colour (as, for example, in the dark or piebald cows and oxen of Van Marcke), make it practically one of the best of the reproductive arts for interpreting rustic pictures and drawings. The want of sharpness in the lithographic line, as compared with that of the burin or the etching-needle, which is the real cause of the present unpopularity of lithography, is scarcely an objection in dealing with subjects of this class. It would be absolutely impossible to make a satisfactory lithograph of one of the brilliant little pictures by which Meissonier first made his reputation—pictures full of sharp, clear, and minute definition; but it is quite possible to translate by lithography a representation on a larger scale of a cottage, a haystack, a yoke of oxen, or even a group of peasants at their work.

So, in those graphic arts which are practised simply for the drawing itself, and without any idea of reproduction, it may be observed that, whilst

THE MILKWOMAN

LINE-ENGRAVING BY LUCAS OF LEYDEN

REPRODUCED IN HÉLIOGRAVURE BY AMAND-DURAND

THE title given to this plate ignores the existence of the herdsman, but as a man does not count for much when a lady is present, this one may find it natural to be neglected.

Lucas of Leyden is a very celebrated original engraver, so connoisseurs seem to take it for granted that he could draw well, but in reality he was a most uncertain draughtsman, especially because he was never sure of his proportions. He had great manual skill and much observation of detail. As for proportion compare the off-hind' foot of the cow with the near one (it is much more diminished by perspective than the distance warrants), or compare the little face of the woman with her enormous ankles. Then why admit the plate? Because of its value in the history of rustic art. It is a forerunner of the rustic art of our own century. Notwithstanding the difficulties of the old formal engraving this artist was imbued with a rustic sentiment struggling for expression in an art unsuitable to it. Even the thick ankles are evidence of a disposition to admit truths contrary to the classical ideal.

1510

finely-pointed instruments have been constantly used for classical studies of the figure, the rustic artists usually avoid them. There is the silver-point, for instance, which gives a fine sharp line, at the same time distinct and pale. It was a favourite instrument with many of the old masters, and very beautiful work they did with it in studies of linear beauty, both in flesh and draperies; but I do not at this moment recall a single study of a picturesque rustic subject in silver-point, though there may be some that have escaped my attention. Millet made drawings in great numbers, including sketches for his private use and drawings made for sale. The private sketches were mostly done with the pen, and not a finely-pointed pen giving delicate lines, but a common pen giving coarse, thick lines, something like those of an old woodcut. With these, and not too many of them, he set down the plain truths that he wanted.[1] The drawings for sale were broadly done in chalk or charcoal. The present rustic painter, Lhermitte, has done so much work in charcoal that it may be considered the basis of his whole performance, and whatever are the qualities of charcoal, it is plain that they do not include much fineness of linear definition.

To sum up. The technical conditions of bucolic art have been such as to encourage the study of texture in oil-painting, and to stimulate attention to colour and light, whilst in engraving they have been favourable to etching and unfavourable to the burin, and in the various kinds of drawing their whole influence has been against finely-pointed instruments and ultra-clearness of definition, and favourable to a certain bluntness and coarseness of method, not implying any real want of refinement in the artist, but answering to the qualities of the things he had to represent, and establishing a kind of harmony between the rudeness of rustic life and the *seeming* rudeness of rustic art—still, however, in reality always fine art.

To this it may be added that when rustic subjects are treated in mural painting, as they have been not infrequently since the revival of mural art and the adoption of more convenient methods than true fresco, another rule prevails, as all severe decorative painting of necessity ignores texture and requires great clearness and precision of linear definition. Rusticity in this kind of art stops far short of realisation, and depends mostly on the appearance of rude physical strength in the personages, and on the natural attitudes of the animals. Agricultural implements and buildings may be

[1] I think I understand one practical reason for the linear coarseness in the private sketches of Millet. He used to paint from them; and it is very convenient for a painter to have all his memoranda as legible as possible, so that he may see what is in them at some distance from the eye. A delicate little drawing is not pleasant for a painter working on a much larger scale. The best studies for use in a painting-room are apparently rude and coarse, with all the facts in them so plainly stated that they can be seen four yards away.

drawn firmly to show their construction well, but without paying attention to those accidental qualities of colour and light that may legitimately make them attractive in an oil picture. The landscape in mural paintings of rustic life may be true in a limited sense—true in the characteristic outlines of hills and trees and the larger foreground plants, but there should be no attempt at any complete truth of effect. As for colour, it should be simplified and kept far below the brilliance and intensity of nature. It is enough to affirm that a distance is blue and a tree autumnal without insisting upon the intensity of the azure and the gold. If these precepts appear arbitrary, it may be answered that they are in conformity both with reason and experience—with reason, as it is evidently right that painting, to be associated with architecture, should be kept subordinate (the wall must still be a wall); and with experience, because those mural paintings which exist are satisfactory only when they have conformed to these requirements.

CHAPTER IV

WAR

A WELL-KNOWN French critic once reproached English authors in general, and myself in particular, with the fault of bad composition—not in the sense of ill-constructed paragraphs or sentences, but in the want of due proportion amongst the parts and chapters of a book. As the best of what every author writes comes from his own experience and direct observation (the rest being usually a kind of digest from his readings, with a commentary), it is, I believe, permissible to give a larger place to what is personal than to what is merely borrowed, even though a certain disproportion, relatively to the subject, should be the result. I do not believe it to be necessary to observe proportion in literature so carefully as in sculpture or architecture, because in those arts the whole work is seen at a glance; whereas, in reading, the person who is supposed to enjoy or criticise the work is led by the author from one field to another, like a visitor going over an estate, and as when he is in one of the fields he cannot be in the others, the size and shape of them are mere matters of recollection, in no wise affecting the field where he happens to be for the moment. When the reader is occupied with this chapter it must be a matter of very small concern to him whether some other chapter, say in the first part, was long or short. Most likely he has already forgotten both its title and its contents.

I do not see how it is possible, in the literature of criticism, to avoid the disproportion that comes from inequality of knowledge and sufficiency or insufficiency of experience, and the critic has never lived whose knowledge, like the rays of the sun, could throw light equally in all directions. It is often a mere matter of accident whether some special kind of information has been acquired or not. No critic in the world, unless he has had experience of boating, can speak with any real authority about the set of the sails or the tension of the ropes in a marine picture; nobody who has

not been taught to play the violin can say whether a painter is right or wrong in the way he represents the positions of the left hand, the action of the fingers, and the peculiar pressure of the bow upon the strings. Yet it is a pure matter of accident, quite independent of studies in the history of art, whether the critic has been fond of boating and fiddling in his youth.

These remarks may prepare the reader for the want of proportion between the treatment of rural and of military life in the present volume. It so happens that I am extremely familiar with rural life in all its details, whilst I have not seen much of war. I have only seen one battle, and that from some distance, with a field-glass. It was chiefly an artillery combat and bombardment, in which riflemen defended the outskirts of a town, whilst the bombshells flew over their position, each with its little cloud of smoke in the clear December air. There were no charges of cavalry, and nothing was done with the bayonet. It was merely an attack and a repulse, of no great interest to the war correspondents.[1] However, besides this I had a few little experiences, such as can only occur in a state of actual war. I witnessed part of the retreat of the *Armée de la Loire*, the disorganised cavalry crossing the snow-covered hills in most miserable plight; and I have met waggon-loads of wounded from the combats in Burgundy. Besides this, for many months there was the constant sight of troops going and coming, and the near neighbourhood of the most picturesque garrison in France.

All this amounted to something; but the impression caused by a state of war was far more mental than ocular. The peculiar sense of insecurity, and the constant presence of death, either from wounds or disease, gave a familiarity with what is terrible that produced a sort of callousness, and changed one's appreciation of things. In ordinary times an execution thrills

[1] In my own small experiences of war, I remember nothing so impressive as hearing the thunder of a battle *of which we could see nothing whatever*. The weather being on that day extremely favourable to the propagation of sound from the battlefield to my house, we heard the cannonade with extreme clearness, though the distance, in a straight line, was exactly twenty-five miles. It lasted a long time—some hours—and gave the impression of being much nearer to us than it was in reality. As we knew nothing about the movements of the Bavarian army, beyond the simple fact that it was in our neighbourhood, the situation of the battle was a complete mystery to us, except that it was somewhere to the eastward. This mystery added greatly to the force of the impression. Here is a case that invites a comparison between literary and graphic art. In a novel, or, still better, in a poem, the distant thunder of battle, skilfully introduced, is in the highest degree effective. It has often been used by naval novelists, who tell us of sea-fights audible but invisible, as the masts of the fighting ships are below the horizon. A poet may go still further, and awaken our sympathies for the dying we cannot see. Besides this, the literary artist can make the audible but invisible battle a cause of intense interest, by awakening anxiety as to the result. "If the enemy wins, he will be down upon us to-morrow." All this is beyond painting. The painter can give us the pale dawn of a December day, he cannot tell us that Werder's distant artillery is already loud with all its voices.

a whole town with a horrible emotion, but we got so used to the insecurity of life that the numerous executions by order of the local court-martial scarcely affected us more than the shootings of lamed horses. It would be easy to expatiate much longer on the strange effects that a state of war produces upon the mind, but in art that is the province of the novelist, and we are here concerned with what is visible.

Now, from the visible aspect of the matter, I should say that a state of war differs from a state of peace in one thing mainly, and that is in rubbing off the polish and disturbing the beautiful regularity of reviews. With all due respect to the military class, it must be admitted that an officer in full dress, in times of peace, does appear too perfect even to be painted. How is art to add anything to him, since he is himself so complete a work of art? And a regiment on parade, in line or square, is even more mechanically perfect than the officer. The better it is from the military point of view, the worse it is for art. The reader probably remembers some lines of Wordsworth, "Written in March," including these three—

> "The cattle are grazing,
> Their heads never raising;
> There are forty feeding like one!"

Would those forty cows be paintable in that complete uniformity of attitude? And is not a company of soldiers worse than the forty cows, which had at least liberty enough to scatter themselves irregularly over the field? The perfection of a company is to lift all its left legs at the same time, and then all its right legs, and to keep its two hundred eyes all looking steadily in the same direction. The discipline of an artillery regiment is shown by being able to preserve, at full gallop, a line of gun-carriages and ammunition-waggons in the same perspective as a row of fixed benches in a church. On parade, before military exercises begin, the merit of the soldier is to be externally neat and clean—that is, to have his clothes well brushed, his shoes blacked, and all his metallic gear carefully polished. Here the soldiers are like the pretty and brilliant vices and chisels in an ironmonger's shop; in warfare they are more like old tools in a smithy, for there is no dirtier work than that which has to be done in the sweat and dust or in the mud and blood of a battlefield. "Amongst the realities of war," said an experienced old officer to me, "there is one that you can never adequately realise, and that is its extreme dirtiness. War is a state of things in which cleanliness becomes not only difficult, but impossible." He then entered into details that cannot be put into a book. Occasionally a chance presents itself when soldiers bathe in some river, like

Michael Angelo's "Soldiers Bathing in the Arno," in the famous cartoon of Pisa. Even in that composition, however, the artist suggests that war has no respect for ablutions, as these men are dressing hurriedly to meet the enemy. The dirt of war is disagreeable, and often most offensive in the reality; in painting it is positively advantageous, if only by getting rid of military perfection. For the same reason the disorder inevitable in warfare, even under the best generalship, offers countless opportunities. I well remember the Garibaldian army in 1870. It was said to be one of the least orderly bodies of men engaged in the great war, but it was by far the most picturesque, and it happened to be in a place where the backgrounds were generally in themselves all that a painter could desire. Some incidents remain in the memory after a lapse of time, though of little importance in themselves. I remember a walk with a friend one afternoon in November 1870. The little city of Autun was crowded with Garibaldians; a German attack was expected every day, and we went to visit the batteries near the old Roman gateway by the river. Thousands of Garibaldians, officers and men, were out in the streets enjoying the beautiful afternoon, which ended with one of those exquisitely poetical twilights that sometimes occur in the late autumn in Burgundy. All over the ancient city there fell a magical, soft, golden light, and in this wandered the strange Italian figures, some active and rapid in their red shirts, others stately in mantle and plume—all of them dignified in our eyes by the imminent call to battle. During that walk we saw a hundred pictures for a de Neuville or a Detaille; yet it was nothing in comparison with the real, terrible drama of the war, or a single scene of it like that painted by de Neuville in "The Surprise at Dawn," where in the cold, early light, half obscured by fog, a small German force has found its way into a village; the French rush out, and in an instant the street is strewn with corpses. When the war was over, and the painters who had been eye-witnesses began to consult their own recollections and such scraps of sketches as they had been able to make, they all seem to have agreed upon one thing, that the proper subjects for art were to be found in separate incidents and episodes, not in the encounter of those great masses of men that occupy the military historian. Landseer was guided by a right instinct when he represented "War" by two dead dragoons amidst the ruins of a cottage, one of the horses killed and the other suffering from a wound. Our powers of sympathy are very limited, and they act most efficiently when called forth by a very few individuals whose features we can see. The emotion caused in us by the narrative of a battle with its slaughter of twenty thousand men is so far from being ten thousand times that awakened in us by the death of two whose faces we look

upon that it is even considerably less poignant. When the claim upon our sympathies is so great as to be utterly beyond their powers, they simply refuse to act. The reason probably is, that sympathy consists mainly in imagining one's self in the situation of the sufferer, and that it is impossible for one man to imagine himself in more than a very few situations. In Landseer's picture of "War" the artist has made no claim beyond what an ordinary imagination can easily meet; so it sets to work at once and does all that is required of it. Painters have often attempted to represent the havoc of a great battle-field. In the most judicious of such attempts the scene is a vast landscape, in which the usual "accidents" of rugged ground, such as boulders or small hillocks, are replaced by the bodies of dead men and horses, the whole seen under a calm and quiet effect of sunshine or moonlight for contrast with the previous storm of battle, and to mark at the same time the complete indifference of external nature to the sanguinary conflicts that divide and devastate the troubled world of men. I am not aware that these pictures ever excite any stronger feeling than an increased dislike of war in those who already desire some more reasonable way of determining the frontiers of nations.

The truth that in these great matters a part only, and a very small part, affects us more than the whole, is fully exemplified in military literature. The defect of Cæsar as a narrator, from the artistic point of view, is that his mind, being essentially that of a general, concerned itself almost exclusively with masses of men, dealing with them always in great numbers, and rarely taking much interest in individuals. If one of Cæsar's officers had been gifted with the talents of a Marbot, the talents of observation and vividly picturesque narrative, the sympathy that follows the fortunes of obscure as well as illustrious actors in the military drama, and which studies even the illustrious, not as commanders only, but as human beings, we should have a much clearer conception of Roman military life. Nothing strikes us more, in General Marbot's inimitable narrative, than the ease with which, by simply using his eyes, he goes beyond all the fictions that have dealt with the same historical events. There has never been a novelist who would have ventured to invent anything approaching to the following account of General Macard:—

"General Macard, a true type of those who had risen by luck and courage, and who, whilst exhibiting real valour in the presence of the enemy, were none the less unfitted for high rank by their want of education, was remarkable for a very strange peculiarity. This singular personage, a colossus of extraordinary bravery, never failed to cry out, when preparing to lead a charge of cavalry, 'Come, I shall dress myself

like a beast!' He then took off his coat, his waistcoat, his shirt, and kept nothing but his plumed hat, his leather breeches, and his big boots! In this guise, naked to the waist, General Macard exposed to public view a torso almost as hairy as that of a bear, which gave the strangest aspect to his person! Dressed in this manner—'en bête,' as he expressed himself with reason—Macard threw himself without hesitation on the enemy's horsemen, but he seldom reached them, for at the sight of the half-naked giant—at the same time so odd and so terrible, covered with hair and in such a strange plight, who dashed at them with frightful yells—the enemies fled on all sides, hardly knowing whether they had to do with a man or with some ferocious and outlandish animal."

Compare this description, as a subject for a picture, with such accounts as you will find in the pages of Thiers. The historian would have said simply, "General Macard, at the head of his brigade, charged the enemy with effect," or he might have given the numbers of men engaged.

Before bidding adieu to that brave soldier and brilliant writer, Marbot, we may accept his testimony that it is possible, under very favourable circumstances, for military painting of the historical kind to be substantially true. The painter Gérard made a picture of the battle of Austerlitz, and chose "the moment when General Rapp, coming from the fight, wounded, and covered all over with the blood of the enemy and his own, presented to the Emperor the flags which had just been taken, as well as Prince Repnin, who had been taken prisoner." Marbot says that he was an eye-witness of this scene, and that the picture is remarkably exact. All the heads are portraits, even that of the brave cavalry soldier who, mortally wounded by a ball that had passed through his body, had still courage enough to come and present a standard he had taken to the Emperor, in doing which he fell down dead at his feet.[1]

Truth of this kind is attainable only when the painter is a contemporary. In fact the picture just described might have been mentioned with equal appropriateness under the title "Portrait," since "all the heads," as Marbot says, "are portraits."

It has perhaps already occurred to the reader to inquire how it happens that military painting, as a branch of art, should be, as a whole, inferior to some others. No one who is acquainted with the history of the fine arts would dispute the assertion that religious painting includes far more of what is elevated, simply as art and without reference to sentiment, than military painting does. I mean that amongst religious pictures we are sure to find more works remarkable for purely pictorial excellence than if our

[1] The portrait of this man was introduced into the picture by the Emperor's special desire.

choice were restricted to battle scenes. To bring the matter to a sort of personal test. Let the reader imagine the case of any collector who understands and values the artistic qualities of a work, and suppose him to be, in his own inclinations, outside of art, neither military nor religious. Are not the chances a hundred to one that the religious pictures in his collection will far surpass the military ones both in number and in excellence? And even without including religious art, if we make the comparison simply between civil and military subjects, will there not be a great predominance, generally speaking, in the first? In the great galleries to which pictures are supposed to obtain admission by their quality, we find religious pictures, historical pictures, scenes of high life and low life, in far greater abundance than military pictures, which have a tendency to get set apart in galleries of an inferior order, such as the wearisome vast wall-areas of Versailles, or the huge and horrifying exhibitions of a Verestchaghine. The production of military pictures—often great in the sense of size, rarely in any other—is in fact a distinct business that can be learned by any clever youth who has a natural talent for portraying action, who has studied men and horses in the ateliers, and whose industry does not shrink from a minute attention to the innumerable details of accoutrements. Horace Vernet is likely to remain the chief of this class of artists who may be employed upon large patriotic works to celebrate the military glories of their country. His present successor, Detaille, is a painter of better quality and of profounder human sympathies, though he may not have those amazing gifts of memory and rapidity that belonged to Vernet, and were especially convenient to himself. Detaille's picture of the "Sortie of the Garrison of Huningen" (a small garrison of which only fifty had survived a siege by immensely superior forces) is one of the most touching military pictures in existence. The French defenders, pale, emaciated, or wounded, come out of their fortress with all the honours of war, and are greeted with profound respect by their Austrian enemies. A patriotic intention is, of course, the principal motive of the work, and that concerns the painter's fellow-citizens; but if we are high-minded enough to rise above the prejudices of nationality, we may all see in it a testimony to the highest of all military virtues, constancy in a defence so hopeless that nothing can be saved but honour.

In seeking for the reasons why military pictures are as a general rule inferior to religious pictures, and to those of ordinary life in the highest qualities of art, I find two which may go far to account for an artistic inferiority. The first is that, naturally, all battle-pictures must represent action, and violent action is a disturbing element in the fine arts. I know how easy it will be for a reviewer to mention pictures by famous artists,

from Michael Angelo downwards, in which action is violent and spread over the whole work, but their reputation does not rest on these. Nobody would say that the reputation of Rubens rested upon "The Battle of the Amazons," or that if all his works had been of that character his name would have been to us what it is. There is Raphael, too, with his "Battle of Constantine." All its over-muscled men and fat cart-horses are not worth one of his virgins, nor is their confused fury worth one serene minute of her divine tranquillity. That "machine" has been extensively imitated by the classical painters of Roman combats, and in their tediously artificial designs we find the same horses, with their big hams and disproportionately little heads, the same half-naked warriors, always with huge muscles, the same inclination of spears and placing of shields, according to the fancied necessities of the composition. No serious critic takes these things for more than exercises in the attitudes of the human figure. One does not expect a painter to show the intellectual side of war; his business is not with strategy, and, in fact, he has not at his disposal the means that would be necessary to make us understand the work of a Von Moltke. When, therefore, he attempts to make visible for us in some measure the great scale of a battle, he is reduced to about a hundred figures in a foreground,[1] or to a battalion or two in the middle distance; the movements of armies are beyond the resources of his art. In the foreground work that properly belongs to him, the military painter is so much the victim of uniforms that he is not free to make purely artistic arrangements of colour; he may have to deal with blue coats or red coats, white trousers or red trousers, and in either case has little liberty. Nor is he much more at his ease in the matter of ornament. The ornaments worn by soldiers are decided for them by authorities who act in complete independence of artistic considerations. They are often ugly and ridiculous, often obtrusive, almost always things that a really great painter, a Titian or a Velasquez, would reject as inconsistent with the gravity and unity of his art. The mere labour involved in imitating braids and buttons is an idle occupation of a serious artist's time. He would prefer a peasant's blouse with Millet, or a monk's hood with Zurbaran. However, there have been great changes and great differences in the artistic value of military dresses and accoutrements. The greatest painters of all ages have loved armour, and leather, and plain, strong, serviceable cloth. Cromwell and his soldiers would have been acceptable to the greatest artists of Venice or of Spain. They had no

[1] After writing the above sentence I tried to count the figures in Raphael's "Battle of Constantine." The visible heads are between ninety and one hundred, that is, about the strength of a company.

frippery about them, and it is the frippery that disquiets art. In our own day there has been a very happy tendency towards sobriety and simplicity in military uniforms, both in form and colour, which brings them more within the range of painting; and besides this there is an increased elegance and a closer approximation to the natural human form which, in some instances, have made them available even for sculpture. With these improvements in the subjects of their art, and a preference of the nobler tragic interests of military life to mere carnage, it is possible that the art that deals with warfare may raise itself to a higher plane.

This chapter has dealt exclusively with warfare by land. Naval warfare, as a subject for art, is considerably less satisfactory in various ways. It has usually belonged much less to figure-painting than to seascape, a class of art more nearly allied to landscape, and which has been practised by landscape-painters, particularly by Turner. Now, in marine pictures it is the ships, and not the men, which are the principal subjects. This is so true, that pictures of wrecks and abandoned vessels still interest us, though there is not a human being on board; as, for instance, Stanfield's famous picture of "The Abandoned." Pictures of naval battles have usually been occupied with great hulls of vessels and clouds of canvas above them, with crashing and falling masts and yards, the whole enveloped in smoke. Small figures, painted not more accurately than they would be in a landscape, are visible on the decks, and in the foreground there are usually a few half-drowned sailors clinging desperately to wreckage. Pictures of this kind have sometimes attained celebrity, like the two of "Trafalgar" by Turner and Stanfield; but they belong to an unsatisfactory kind of art, being artificial compositions made up from documents eked out by the artists' imagination, and not resulting from impressions received from an actual sight of the reality. Stanfield, it is true, had made several long voyages as a sailor, and Turner was not unfamiliar with the Channel. These experiences are not worth that of William Vandevelde, who witnessed from a small boat the battle between the English and Dutch fleets in 1666, and afterwards painted it. His experience is most exceptional amongst marine painters. As a class they are not only much less interesting than painters who have witnessed actual warfare on land, but, from the human point of view, less interesting than such a novelist as Marryat, who described, mainly from recollection, not only the outward appearance of men-of-war, but the bodily activity and the mental sensations of our sailors in the great naval age of Nelson.

CHAPTER V

WAR IDEALISED

WAR may be considered from three different points of view, the philosophical, the practical, and the romantic or poetical. It is the two last which immediately concern the fine arts, and especially the last of all, so far as anything approaching to great art is concerned.

It is almost a digression in a work on the fine arts to pause, even during the length of a single page, for a consideration of war from a philosophical point of view, yet it is that alone which elevates it sufficiently to make it a worthy subject for art of a high order. If war had not some important purpose to fulfil in the economy of nature, and in the regulation of human life as a part of nature, the brutality and barbarity of it would repel us as we are now repelled by pictures of judicial torture. If we still believed that judicial torture was only a direct way of ascertaining truth, it is likely that we should not be more repelled by the representation of it in art than our forefathers were by the reality. Few of us can now endure representations of torture even in a public gallery, still less in our private rooms, and this passing allusion to them is all the notice they will receive in the present volume.

Humane people try in various ways to reconcile themselves to war. They repeat, after Von Moltke, that it is the best school of obedience and of courage, and they look upon commanders as the schoolmasters. There is another consideration higher and more comprehensive than that.

War has hitherto been the chief agent in the making of great nations; and as a great nation is an extensive area of internal peace, the wars that made it have prepared the peace. The steady tendency of war is to increase the area of nations, and so diminish the number of rulers in a position to declare war. Even now we see on the continent of Europe what may be the beginning of the end. Not only are the nations themselves less numerous than before, considered as independent states, but they

have been compelled by the force of circumstances to alienate their independence still further by arranging themselves in two groups. This suggests the conclusion that Napoleon I., when he practically divided the Continent between himself and the Czar, was not a mere disturber of the world, but an agent acting under a natural law, and pushing forward towards a necessary future. He may even have conceived a future as yet beyond us when he looked to the hegemony of a single Power, and his only errors may have been to attempt a settlement in the nineteenth century that the real course of events had reserved for the twentieth, and to believe that the supreme Power was to be France when it may turn out to be Germany or Russia. The Roman peace of antiquity, in which conquered Gaul was kept in order by a very small force, may be the precursor of a peace still vaster and more permanent, in which the dread of one great state will make all others keep the peace as Holland does now, without the necessity of any foreign occupation. In fact, we are already so near to this that if the power of Germany were a little greater such a state of things would be practically realised. According to this view, the human energy that spends itself in war is a natural force, acting unconsciously and mysteriously, yet with the certainty of all the great natural forces, and tending towards an ultimate order and tranquillity not otherwise attainable.

This is the scientific counterpart of the theological explanation that wars take place by the permission of the Almighty, and that "Slaughter is God's daughter." The difference is that science points to a definite political good as the result of successive conflicts.

It may be asked what these speculations, of unrivalled interest in themselves, have to do with the fine arts. The answer has been already given. It is that if war had not some great end to serve, it would be purely horrible and repulsive, but that a larger conception of it, whether theological or scientific, enables our minds to get beyond the carnage, and, in that way, to endure it.

Still, the whole truth about war cannot properly be told in the fine arts. During the bloody campaigns in the Soudan some illustrated journals gave much more of the horrors than was compatible with higher forms of art, and even they were in some respects reticent, besides which, black and white do not imitate blood as it is imitated in the sickening pictures of Rochegrosse. And there are horrors in war that no draughtsman dares to describe, nor writer either. Sometimes a military man will tell a friend in private what he has seen; many of us have received such confidences; they are of no literary or artistic use, they pass unrecorded like a whiff of carrion in the air.

What remains to the practical-minded, unimaginative painter is a kind of truth, literal as far as it goes, and very careful of such details as those of uniforms and the position of troops. It becomes scientific art in this way, that it includes the science possessed by officers, so far as it can be made visible. I notice that whenever this scientific temper attains perfection in a painter, it is sure to be accompanied by a tolerance of purely mechanical construction that a great artist would not be likely to have. One cannot imagine a great painter like Titian copying a modern iron bridge, with all its plates and rivets, as these modern military painters will. The hard lines of it, and its monotonous colour, would be repugnant to his cultivated taste.

There is no influence so powerful in driving us to seek refuge in the ideal as the perfection of an art that reflects reality with an excessive and obtrusive exactitude. The more precisely truthful the representation of modern war, the more willing are we to escape from it. The best deliverance is in those forms of art which cast an imaginative glamour over warfare, either by dwelling on its most heroic aspects, or by throwing it back into a past that is either distant or fictitious, and then describing it with the most noble associations. To do this with complete success is to transport the mind from the region of fact to that of poetry, and to dwell contentedly in that land as only those minds can which are able to detach themselves from the actual. The quintessence of this spirit, that I may call the dream or idealisation of war, is to be found in the ghostly warriors "of godlike stature" in the sky of Turner's vignette, illustrating some lines by Rogers in his "Voyage of Columbus." In many pictures the warriors have been on the earth, yet it is not the common earth familiar to us in the world of reality, it is an ideal region, where nothing is to be seen that could possibly be harmful in a picture. In that land troops are not packed into railway trains like sardines in tin boxes, nor do big transport ships take up whole regiments at a straight-sided quay, but a few helmeted horsemen ride down the rough and winding ways, through sun and shade, or we catch a glimpse of their glittering armour in the moonlight, in some glade of the primeval forest. If they embark it is in little ships with wooden turrets at prow and stern—little ships that seem so full of courage as they face the immensity of the sea. And beyond the sea itself there are the distant hostile shores, mysterious, where the Paynims dwell. Everything in that land is interesting, because nothing is ever anticipated by science. We consult no maps—there are none—the unexpected character of the landscape is made possible by its entire independence of geology; even the armour and the rare glories of architecture are taken in some vague and uncertain past that has never been divided by dates. The splendours of

the thirteenth century shine in some chapel or castle of the Arthurian age, and we do not think of protesting because the age is really independent of chronology. It is distant in time as the stars are remote from us in space, and yet, somehow, subsequent to the establishment of Christianity. The truth is that this land of romance is a dreamland peopled with images taken from our readings of several poets and a few historians—a dreamland not unknown to the more imaginative painters, who have illustrated it in their own way. Its warfare is at the same time the grandest of all warfares, and the least oppressive to the instinct of self-preservation. Hosts meet in furious conflict, and many a brave knight dies, but not without having manfully defended himself. He is not slaughtered by a pot of chemicals and an electric wire. Nor is there any oppressive claim upon our sympathies for the wounded. Men and horses go down in the stress of battle, and that is all we are told about them. There are no ambulances, no military hospitals, no surgeons, no operations. We see nothing of those horrors of war that are really the hardest to bear, because they have to be endured without its sublime excitement. The ideal warfare may be fierce and furious, it is never depressing. What becomes of the wounded in its battles? Neither painters nor poets tell us, and we do not inquire. They drop out of the charging squadrons, as travelling swallows drop unrecorded into the sea; they are maimed and forgotten, as the field-mouse is maimed by the mower's scythe. Only whilst we read the pages of the dreaming poet, or look at the idealised picture, can we dwell for a time in that land where conflict is all heroism and bravery, where swords and lances are the only weapons, except the flying arrow, and where mere senseless matter does least to thwart the energy of man. In that land even the landscape itself, by its breadth and grandeur—nay, the very clouds in the sky—are nobler than in the common world. And all nature seems to take part in the action, or to wait upon it. When the horsemen ride westward in the evening, the light from the after-glow gleams upon their spears. The moonlight glimmers on the swirling eddies of the stream they have to ford. The skies are dark and threatening over the barren plain where the bold knight is riding alone, undepressed by the fearful solitude, even though for him it be spirit-haunted. When an army is on the march the movement of inanimate nature seems to accompany it—

> "Winds were blowing, waters flowing,
> We heard the steeds to battle going."

In Homer the rivers know that their waters are polluted with blood and their currents dammed up with corpses. Scamander complains to Achilles,

"If indeed the son of Kronos hath delivered thee all the Trojans to destroy, at least drive them forth from me, and do thy grim deeds on the plain, for filled with dead men is my pleasant bed; nor can I pour my stream to the great sea, being choked with dead, and thou slayest ruthlessly."

In the "Song of Roland," that great epic of mediæval chivalry, we are told that whilst the battle was being fought in the defiles of Roncevaux, there was a perturbation of nature even in France. From noon to vespers the realm was under thick nocturnal darkness, and neither sun nor moon gave any light. "All who saw these things believed that their end was come; and well, in verity, might they be in such sadness in the hour when he who led all others, when Roland died."

The tendency to associate nature with the conflicts of armies that we find in mediæval literature may have its origin in an antiquity even greater than that of Homer. The mediæval poet would always remember and believe the famous passage in very early history, where a great leader "said in the sight of Israel, *Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon*; *and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.*"

I wish to end this chapter with two or three supplementary paragraphs.

This is clearly one of those cases where the imaginative treatment of a subject conveys a deeper truth than the literal. For, after all, it is not the accidents of war (and it is full of accidents) that make its greatness, but the cool and determined valour of brave men, taking, especially in modern times, the form of willingness to be sacrificed, often in rather large numbers, even a regiment or more at a time,[1] for the success of the military operations. I remember a conversation with a French officer, in which he calmly told me that a general who did not understand *and act upon* the principle of sacrifice was not a general, and that every soldier worth the name was willing to be sacrificed, on due occasion, to the interests of the army engaged. Every military man will take this simply as a commonplace of his profession; but is there any other profession, except the medical, in which men consciously incur risks of death, amounting to certainty, in order that others may succeed?

In literature an idealised account of war may also be essentially the truest, for the dirt, the diseases, and other disgusting circumstances, as well as the low and inadequate, and sometimes unclean, language employed by uneducated private soldiers, and the depreciating slang of officers, have no connection with the great purposes of war, and may be omitted without any

[1] There was a very fine example of this at the battle of Eylau.

loss but that of a mean kind of veracity. There is such a dread of using fine words, even when most strictly applicable, that "heroism" and "devotion" are not likely to be pronounced in armies most distinguished for these qualities; some depreciatory bit of slang would equally serve the purpose. In all the higher arts the nobler kind of truth is disengaged from elements of vulgarity that interfere with our due appreciation of its nature, and so, in a quite intelligible sense, these elevated arts are truer than the literal representation of facts and accidents, many of which it is impossible to describe even in the half-scientific literature of criticism. Again, the supposed sympathy of material and external Nature with the anxieties and agonies of human conflict is plainly a matter of imagination; these marvels did not actually occur. Still, in a deeper sense, there is a kind of truth in them, for the reason, by no means fanciful, that war itself is a part of Nature, like the attacks of the wearing and wasting waves. Inanimate objects do not care whether we are fighting or at peace, and it is mere fancy to assume that they do; nevertheless, they and we are alike subordinated to natural law, and in that sense the fundamental likeness beween the thunder of cannon and that of meeting thunderclouds is equal to the remarkable similarity in their sounds.

CHAPTER VI

SOLDIERS IN PEACE

THERE is absolutely no other profession in the world that presents so strong a contrast between two opposite states of life as does that of a land army. "The armies of the sea," to translate literally an expression that is not English, are on a kind of active service even in times of peace. They are confined to their floating fortresses, and a storm may replace a battle. The incessant vigilance and activity that prevail on shipboard bear some resemblance to the vigilance and activity of war. With a land army the contrast between garrison duty and active service is only lessened during autumnal manœuvres. In what other profession is such a contrast possible? In every other business the daily work is serious, in this it is mere practice, as when a boy goes through the motions of swimming in the house. The pacing sentinel watches for an enemy who has no existence, the mounted escort defends a Sovereign whom nobody thinks of attacking, and the regiment of infantry, formed in square, prepares to resist a charge of invisible cavalry.

If the same principle of constant practice in mere drill were applied to other occupations, we should see shopmen, year after year, unfolding their wares before imaginary customers, barristers appealing to the clemency of twelve empty chairs, and clergymen preaching earnestly to four walls. Waiters would serve empty dishes to imaginary guests, and journalists would go through the manual exercise of writing without shedding a drop of ink upon the paper. If we were told that these exercises were serious, that at some future time, as yet unknown, it might prove useful or necessary to have gone through them, we might believe the statement, but only people with rare foresight would realise it.

This is how it comes to pass that whilst a land army is respected in time of war it is seldom, during a long peace, taken quite so seriously as it deserves. Has not the reader observed that almost all military pictures of

COSSACKS

DRAWN BY CARAN D'ACHE

REPRODUCED IN HÉLIOGRAVURE BY P. DUJARDIN

THIS is rather a humorous drawing than a caricature. At the same time it is a remarkably good technical example of clear linear drawing aided by slight brush-work applied with great discretion and reserve. Had the brush-work been a little in excess of what it is the lines would have been overpowered by it, and it would have ceased to be a simple accompaniment.

The strength of such work as this lies in its pitilessly truthful observation, which makes heroic grandeur of the visible kind impossible by exhibiting so much in form and attitude that is incompatible with it. As for accurate observation of nature and downright veracity in delineation I do not hesitate to say that there is more of both in these six horses or ponies than in all the fat open-mouthed prancing steeds in the battle-pieces by the old masters.

I owe best thanks to Mr. Tripp for having kindly allowed me to reproduce this drawing, hitherto unpublished.

Some readers may thank me for telling them that the right pronunciation of *d'Ache* is simply *Dash*.

Mon excellent ami
Richard H. Tripp
Tendre souvenir
de
Taran d'Arche
Janv. 92

a high class represent soldiers in war-time, not always actually fighting, but during a campaign, perhaps in a retreat; for the glory or gloom of the particular situation signifies little, provided that the painter shows us the realities of war? Soldiers in peace-time, on the contrary, are the constant prey of the caricaturist. Since the peace of 1871 the French and Germans have been incessantly caricaturing their own defenders, not in a really ill-natured spirit, but in a spirit of harmless fun, and so in minor degrees do the English and Italians. The sublimity of war is apt to be forgotten in a quiet garrison town, and instead of thinking about that the artist amuses himself by criticising the military class which attracts attention by its peculiar costume and bearing. If a foreign army comes under his notice he is likely to be more cruel. The nature of this volume did not permit me to include positive caricature, but I could not resist the quiet humour of this drawing by Caran d'Ache.

CHAPTER VII

NOBLES AND CITIZENS IN PEACE

THE title of this chapter has cost me some pains, and is still rather convenient than complete. I wanted a brief title that would include all the aristocratic classes and the well-to-do middle classes also. It is impossible to express that very laconically in the English language, and yet it will be more interesting to speak of these in one chapter than in two, because there is a contrast, and contrasts are of the utmost value in literature, both to an author for strength of effect and to the reader as aids to memory.

The conception of "noble life" in countries where there is a perfectly distinct noblesse is that of abstinence from work that is paid for, along with bodily activity, chiefly exhibited in the chase. "According to the expression of those days," wrote General Marbot, "my family lived *nobly*, that is, on its own revenues without any profession or industry." A noblesse is sometimes cultivated intellectually and sometimes it is not; that difference is of immense importance in literature—I mean in those histories and novels which describe a noble class; but the importance of it in the graphic arts that represent the outward appearance of the class is so small as to be hardly worth consideration. When, however, we come to the bodily activities, the case is entirely altered. It is strange, but unquestionably true, that an artist's estimate of a noblesse is nearer to that of the peasant than to that of the scholar. The artist values those qualities that can be seen, not those that can only be appreciated intellectually. In war time a vigorous noblesse has an ample field for its courage and activity; in times of peace the same physical vigour produces uneasiness unless it has an outlet, and this it finds in the chase. The consequence is that pictures representing the noble classes, when they are not historical pictures, but works founded upon the artist's personal observation of high life, are almost invariably connected with hunting or shooting, directly or indirectly. In

saying this I do not refer to portraits. These are commonly painted as if the subject were indoors, yet amongst open-air portraits those referring to field sports are very numerous.

The favourite artist of the English upper classes in the Victorian age has been Sir Edwin Landseer. That famous painter knew those classes so intimately, and had so many opportunities of observing their daily life, that his testimony as an eye-witness would be of the greatest value were it not naturally biassed by his love of animals, and his extraordinary skill in representing them. Landseer's view of aristocratic life may be expressed with an apparent contradiction in this way ; it was a barbarian life associated with much external refinement. This view would in many cases be sufficiently just, in others it would be inadequate. When field sports are the main business of a gentleman's existence, a Landseer would do him justice ; but when they are only its recreation, its source of physical renewal, and the life itself is in another activity (say, politics or science), then Landseer is a superficial interpreter. There is another kind of insufficiency in the art of Landseer, as in that of Sir Francis Grant and all other painters of aristocratic existence whom I remember. They never attempt any representation of its tragedy—of the tragedy, I mean, which is common to all ranks, and from which no social distinction gives any of us a real immunity. In this, perhaps, there may still be a kind of truth. It has been said by a close observer that the chief characteristic of good society is to live in a region where evil of all kinds is made to seem remote, a region where all horrors and cruel sufferings are diminished as much as possible by silence, or discreet and reserved speech, where everything is represented as quietly agreeable, and where by a tacit convention it has been decided to ignore both the fierceness of human passion and the depth of human despair. The representation of high life in painting seems to answer to this conception, as it seldom gets beyond the mild emotions of the drawing-room or the garden party unless it takes us upon the moors and invites us to share the anxieties of the deer-stalker, whose finger is on the trigger when the stag pauses to listen in the glen. In this view of aristocratic life it seems to me that painting is greatly inferior to literature, which analyses motives and exhibits the hidden springs of character and action. What are court-pictures in comparison with a few chapters by a master of historical writing, or even by some observer who has watched court-life day by day ? The best of such pictures are merely external, and their value depends almost exclusively upon technical qualities, such as drawing, colour, and composition. Some readers may remember a picture by Winterhalter representing the Empress Eugénie and the ladies of her court. It was nothing

but a group of pretty women in a park, deftly painted in unnatural hues, and suggesting a competitive exhibition of beauties decked out by rival milliners. The apex of the group was the fair imperial head which seemed to say, "I reign by beauty as well as by rank and station," and to have no other idea. These vanities are the sufficient motives of the court-painter. He has his place in the order of the universe as a recorder of evanescent glories. The most precious element in Winterhalter's picture is its entirely unintentional pathos. It is but a few short years since all these beauties were amusing themselves every day, and devising new amusements for the morrow. Where are they all now? The site of the Tuileries is a public garden, Compiègne is without an inhabitant, a respectable President retires occasionally to a corner of Fontainebleau, and the workman are carting away the last loads of rubbish from the blackened ruins of St. Cloud.

Lord Byron once said that a poet's choice in society was between high life and solitude. It is simply true that poetry finds itself most at ease in describing an idealised life of the highest classes, or in giving beautiful forms to the meditations of some solitary philosopher. In actual life crowned heads are rare, and becoming still rarer, whilst there are surgeons and attorneys in every town. In poetry kings are very common, even the most democratic poets tell us long stories about them (as, for example, does Mr. William Morris), whilst of surgeons and attorneys we find hardly any record in poetry, and the few occasional references to them are usually either unsympathetic or contemptuous. In painting, on the contrary, it is the middle and the lower classes that have had the largest share of attention, and it is the middle classes, in particular, that have been most perfectly represented in their ordinary habits of life. (The reader will understand that this refers to the class of composed pictures usually called "genre," and not to portrait.) The reason for this I take to be the social station that has been most commonly occupied by painters themselves. As a rule, in all countries, a painter who attains an ordinary degree of reputation has easy access to the homes of the intelligent and fairly wealthy middle class, and forms his friendships there; but unless he belongs himself to an aristocratic family (there have been some instances of this) he has not the same frequent opportunities for observing an exclusive aristocracy, and therefore does not enter so easily into the realities of its every-day life.

The perfection of middle-class life in painting is to be found in the Dutch painters of the seventeenth century, and what we know of their existence confirms the theory that I have just proposed. Vosmaer says expressly, "Les artistes hollandais étaient issus de la bonne bourgeoisie et ils continuaient à vivre dans leur monde. On ne vit que rarement des

THE CRADLE

PAINTED BY NICHOLAS MAES

ETCHED BY C. O. MURRAY

(National Gallery)

SELECTED as a faithful representation of infancy and childhood, and also because this is a kind of picture that translates well in etching. There are great differences amongst pictures in this respect, classical painting generally being unsuitable for etching, whilst Dutch interiors, as a rule, are well adapted to this art. Maes was a pupil of Rembrandt, and as Rembrandt always conceived subjects like an etcher, his pupil may have caught the habit from him.

There is a curious contrast in this picture between the richness of the table-cloth and the bareness and simplicity of everything else. Without the table-cloth we should be in a very poor dwelling, with it we are in the well-to-do middle class of Holland.

relations un peu intimes entre eux et les patriciens." Speaking particularly of Rembrandt, the same authority says that his manner of life was extremely simple, that his days were passed in study and work, as his enormous productivity proves; but that, although he liked to meet intimate friends and persons whose conversation was profitable to him, he was never an "homme du monde." "Ennemi de tout éclat et d'une gloire banale, il n'a pas cherché la faveur des grands. Il préféra la société bourgeoise."

Rembrandt, however, was too great a man, too imaginative, and too much inclined towards sublimity in thought and feeling, to be an entirely satisfactory painter of the citizen middle class. The best painters of that class have been quiet observers developing great manual skill in a placid condition of intellectual somnolence and industrious contentment, their minds so disengaged from all great and serious preoccupations that the whole strength of them could be devoted to such objects as the correct imitation of clothes and furniture, or the tones of sunshine and shadow on a wall. The lives of the citizens, as represented by these masters, were above all things notable for quiet satisfaction in tidiness, decency, and comfort. It is these, and not any intellectual superiority, that are the first aims of civilisation. The higher culture comes afterwards, and is only for a few; it cannot be in any way adequately represented in the graphic arts, it can only be suggested, as in Ary Renan's portrait of his father, by surrounding the studious man with books, or, as in two or three of Rembrandt's pictures of philosophers, by representing these exceptional personages as actually "tackling" some ponderous tome that lies open before them on a reading-desk. But the bourgeois or citizen success (I might have said the Philistine success had I not wished to avoid the appearance of contempt for it) is of a kind that can be most completely represented in painting. The handsome dresses and furniture, the perfect order and cleanliness, the calm personal felicity of the well-to-do, can all be even better described by the painter's art than by that of the poet or the novelist. This bourgeois art, when of the best kind, is one that leaves nothing to be desired; you may prefer some other class of subject, but this in its own way has completeness. It is true that the well-dressed people do not speak, but who wishes them to speak, who supposes that they would have anything interesting to say? The novelist may here envy the painter his liberty to leave his personages silent. The art critic may envy their silence on his own account, as there is little to be said about them beyond the simple fact that, if skilfully painted, they do excellently well in a picture. No one ever reached greater perfection in this kind of art than Gerard Terburg, though he by no means confined himself to it exclusively. As

his life passed between 1608 and 1681, and as he was almost the inventor of the citizen interior as a subject for pictures lying outside of portraiture, it may be a convenience to remember these dates. In England during the nineteenth century, art of this class has been very little practised in the illustration of contemporary life. There appear to be two reasons for this abstinence. The first is that during the first half of the present century the furniture and costumes of English people, though physically comfortable, were unsuitable for the purposes of art. The second is that the English mind likes to have some kind of interest in a picture beyond what is purely artistic; it likes what has been, not inaptly, called a literary interest, and of this there is none whatever in the class of subject we are now considering. Painters, therefore, simply as a matter of prudence, would be led to seek for more or less dramatic and interesting situations, they would not feel it to be enough to paint simply the life of their own time in its moments of rest and stagnation. Perhaps now that the interiors of houses are much prettier and more artistic than they were in the days of our immediate forefathers, and now that the nature of the fine arts is so much better understood than it was formerly, the painters of England may revive in their own way a kind of art which has two very valuable qualities—first, a certain quietness and repose which are highly favourable to excellence in colour and execution; and secondly, an independence so complete that each picture tells its own story, and has no occasion for any reference to the writings of the historian or the novelist.

EPILOGUE

THIS book closes for me with a drawerful of unused memoranda, and an equivalent quantity of "intentions" in my mind which cannot here be carried out. I have an intense dislike to writing chapters merely to bring in materials, like a builder who erects a chapel to include columns and capitals that have been found elsewhere and are to be utilised by his ingenuity. It seems to me that writing which makes any claim to quality as literature, or which aims at any quality, must use nothing beyond its own immediate requirements. If whilst the writer is intent upon the exposition of some idea, or the development of some doctrine, it occurs to him that there is an example to be given that will strengthen his position, let him give it at once and go on with his argument, but do not let him accumulate unnecessary examples only because he has them amongst his materials, and do not let him go out of his way because he knows of something that might be said, though it lies outside of his real purpose.

Literature and the graphic arts are so different, that what is excellent material for a painter often leaves a writer with very little to say. When this happens, the writer ought to respect his own art and not sacrifice it to another. Many pictures are technically of good quality, but mindless except so far as mind is necessary for technical craft and manual skill. If, at the same time, they are destitute of incident and action, there is really nothing to be said about them except that they are well painted—a simple assertion that does not carry a writer far. Why should he trouble himself to say more than the case requires? A Dutch painter may have spent months in painting a servant girl scraping carrots. In literature the proper parallel would be a study of such a girl's character and life in a novel; art criticism would have nothing to say about the girl herself, as it knows neither her name nor her history, all that remains is to give a technical account of the picture, which must either be brief or wearisome. It is only after long experience in criticism that we perceive the curious differences in

the availableness of artists and their works as subjects for literary treatment. This availableness is independent of simple merit. Rembrandt is an excellent subject, because he is full of variety and contrast, and because his interest in human life was so comprehensive. Michael Angelo is not nearly so good, because the two qualities of his work, science and physical sublimity, can scarcely supply matter for a lengthened essay; you say that he was learned, that he understood the art of making religious personages look dignified and sublime, and that is almost all that there is to say. Turner is an excellent subject, because his art had such an immense range and was so full of novelty, so much animated by the two stimulating spirits of rivalry and discovery; Claude is a subject for a short essay; the art of Corot may be described, in all its essentials, in a page. Amongst illustrators, Gustave Doré is a much better subject than Vierge, though he never drew so well; but in writing the difference between excellent drawing and that which is not excellent may be stated in a sentence, and after that the greater range and variety of Doré would give interest to a longer criticism.

These are merely a few examples; it would be easy to adduce many others. It is enough to say that the numerous omissions in this volume, of which nobody can be more clearly conscious than the author, are due chiefly to his unwillingness to offer disconnected memoranda. It can, no doubt, be done, but such memoranda are not likely to be accepted unless they come from one whose authority is derived from great eminence in practice. The model of that kind of composition is the "Treatise on Painting," by Lionardo da Vinci—a treatise which survives with the fame of him who painted the "Mona Lisa"; but no critic of our time could venture to write so artlessly. For example, he tells us "how to paint women":—

"Women are to be represented in modest and reserved attitudes, with their knees rather close, their arms drawing near each other, or folded about the body, their heads looking downwards, and leaning a little on one side."

Nor could a modern writer print such directions as these for the representation of despair:—

"The last act of despondency is when a man is in the act of putting a period to his own existence. He should be represented with a knife in one hand, with which he has already inflicted the wound, and tearing it open with the other. His garments and hair should be already torn. He will be standing with his feet asunder, his knees a little bent, and his body leaning forward, as if ready to fall to the ground."

Considered as literature, nothing can be easier than this style of

composition, particularly because the precepts are isolated and may be indefinitely multiplied.

Had my book been didactic rather than literary, and intended for the use of art students, it would have been quite necessary to give several chapters on physical action; but that, in reality, is a strictly scientific subject, and a most difficult one to deal with. Instantaneous photography first demonstrated that artists had only represented *what they supposed to be action*, not the real action itself, and this led a few scientific men to investigate the subject with their own methods and appliances. At the present time these investigations are being carried out with great patience and in a severely scientific manner at the *Station Physiologique du Parc des Princes*, close to Paris, an establishment belonging to the *Collége de France*. When the results of these investigations are fully given to the world, all the artistic treatises on the subject of physical action will become suddenly obsolete. We have been taught enough already by instantaneous photography to be certain that no artist before our own time ever knew how a horse galloped or a man jumped. If any one were imprudent enough to publish a treatise on physical action at the date of the present volume, it could only be a compilation and a mixture of two contradictory theories—the old artistic theory, which will be extinct in a few years, and the new scientific one, as yet imperfectly established. These considerations were enough to deter me from the insertion of chapters on the study of motion. There is also another reason. Scientific investigations or compilations ought to be reserved for scientific books. When scientific work is done as it ought to be, it is a thing apart from literature, and it differs from literature in requiring another temper of mind both in author and student. Its reward is fresh discovery, and I had no hope of discovering anything that would not be soon superseded by investigators with a special equipment for such work. Another reason for discouragement is that I have not a robust faith in the supposed service of these labours to the fine arts. For example, take the action of horses. Painters who go to instantaneous photographs for the gallop may be accurate, but their horses do not *seem* to gallop, they look rather as if they were trying to assume impossible fixed positions. In course of time people may be educated to see action truly in nature; at present they cannot, and until they can do that the art which goes beyond sight and relies upon knowledge will be unfaithful to the first principle of visual truth.

Action and expression are very closely allied, though expression often lasts much longer, as in the case of a countenance that is permanently melancholy. Expression has been better investigated than action, particu-

larly by the observant genius of Sir Charles Bell, who brought to his task the knowledge of an anatomist with the interest of a lover of art. His work on the *Anatomy of Expression* has been in my library forty years, and has been frequently studied. One effect of it has been to deter me from writing a chapter on the subject. An inadequate book already in existence is a strong stimulus to write another; a good one produces exactly the contrary effect. Sir Charles Bell even goes beyond what is strictly necessary—I mean when he studies those extremes of violent expression, and those convulsions of disease that are not properly admissible in the fine arts.

After selecting the illustrations to the present volume, I discovered for the first time that my own taste, with regard to action and expression, is completely in harmony with that of Lessing and Meissonier. Some readers may remember that all the early works of Meissonier represent figures either in complete repose, as a smoker or a reader in his chair, or else doing something that can be done slowly and with little effort, and they never have any violent or excessive expression. This showed his real opinion about the subjects most suitable for art. Then came the critics who attributed this choice to inability to represent action, and Meissonier answered them by painting "La Rixe" (the scuffle), in which two men have quarrelled and are trying to kill each other, but are forcibly held back by their friends. Here the action is as violent as it possibly can be, but as Meissonier had proved in this picture that he did not abstain from such action from a consciousness of incompetence, the "Rixe" stands alone amongst his works. The reasons against the choice of all subjects of that class were given by Lessing in these terms:—

"Again, since this single moment receives from art an unchanging duration, it should express nothing essentially transitory. All phenomena whose nature it is suddenly to break out and as suddenly to disappear, which can remain as they are but for a moment; all such phenomena, whether agreeable or otherwise, acquire, through the perpetuity conferred upon them by art, such an unnatural appearance, that the impression they produce becomes weaker with every fresh observation, till the whole subject at last wearies or disgusts us."

I find that I have no objection to rapid or violent action in slight sketches that are to be glanced at for a moment, but that I dislike it in statues and finished pictures. It is admissible in book-illustration, especially when the sketches are very numerous. Amongst the wonderful illustrations to *Pablo of Segovia*, by Vierge, many are in violent action. I remember one particularly, a youth running round a corner and a man after him with

BEDTIME

TWO STUDIES BY G. D. LESLIE, R.A.

REPRODUCED IN PHOTOGRAVURE BY ANNAN AND SWAN

IN the original one of these studies was in black chalk and the other in red. They might easily have been printed so, but Mr. Leslie preferred to have them in the same ink. I thank him for lending the drawing "to an old friend" as he kindly expressed it.

From the slightly displeased expression on the young mother's countenance, and also from her attitude, which is not precisely affectionate, we may infer that the child has not been altogether agreeable.

I chose the drawing with the idea that there would probably be a chapter on the representation of infancy in art, but felt afterwards that I had not the necessary enthusiasm about babies, so that the plate remains almost unsupported by letterpress. However, it can do without, and even this brief page allows me to say that I share the young woman's evident conviction that babies are "best in bed." In prevision of all the obloquy that this will draw down upon me I hasten to add that I wish them no harm, and consider it quite wrong to turn them prematurely into angels by smothering or starvation.

Bed Time
G. D L.

a dagger, in furious pursuit. For an instant you see them in motion, but if you pause before turning the page the effect is like a sudden stoppage in the middle of a tune. This arrest in action was turned to admirable account by Matthew Arnold in his description of the huntsman on the tapestry in *Tristram and Iseult*, where, to account for it, he supposes the huntsman's movements suspended by what he sees in the room.

I agree equally with Lessing in what he says of the extremes of expression :—

"There are passions and degrees of passion whose expression produces the most hideous contortions of the face, and throws the whole body into such unnatural positions as to destroy all the beautiful lines that mark it when in a state of greater repose. These passions the old artists either refrained altogether from representing, or softened into emotions which were capable of being expressed with some degree of beauty."

To my taste the most permanently attractive of all portraits is the melancholy young man by Francia in the Louvre. There is a great deal of expression in that portrait, but as it is of a kind that might last indefinitely in saddened solitude, it loses nothing by the length of our contemplation. It even gains, in this way, that the longer we look the more deeply we feel the mystery of a melancholy that will remain an enigma so long as the picture lasts.

I had intended to give two or three chapters on allegorical painting and sculpture, but though materials were not wanting, I delayed the writing till it was too late. Few artists have cared to make their allegories rational and consistent, so the result of that kind of art is usually little more than a certain technical advantage—that is, it permits the introduction of ideal figures. Even in this there lurks a great danger of incongruousness. The ideal figures may be inconsistent with each other, or they may be grouped with real persons, who look ridiculous in such august society. Both faults are to be seen in the well-known compositions of Rubens in honour of Henri IV. and Marie de Médicis. The painter calmly presented personages then living in the flesh on the same canvases with the gods and goddesses of an extinct religion, and personifications of virtues and vices as well as of kingdoms and great cities. If the same irrational system prevailed in our own day we should have serious pictures of Queen Victoria with Erin, Clemency, and Home Rule. In the same series of pictures Rubens has personified France in one woman and Lyons and Marseilles in two others, as if Lyons and Marseilles were not parts of France, and as if they could be detached from France without disruption of the kingdom. In spiritual things, we have Religion in one figure and Justice and Truth in two others,

as if Religion did not herself always claim to be Truth and Justice too. A mere political arrangement, the Regency, is made into a figure along with such conceptions as Fecundity and Felicity, though the first is temporary and local, the others outside of time. The only safe rule in allegorical art is to keep everything out of each work that is not in the same order of ideal conceptions as the rest, and always to exclude reality most rigorously. With the kind of consistency that this rule ensures, and a high degree of idealisation, without which allegorical art is intolerable, that kind of art may still continue to flourish in mural painting and in monumental sculpture. Allegory is very commonly resorted to in caricature, because the sublime in it is so easily turned into the ridiculous.

Amongst other intentions not carried out has been that of a chapter on Death, as dead bodies have been so frequently carved and painted, and are quite favourite subjects with some masters—for example, Jean Paul Laurens. Until the uncompromising realism of modern war-painters and draughtsmen took the subject in hand, the most dreadful aspect of death had scarcely been illustrated at all, and that is a false resemblance to life, as when men slain in battle appear to retain a sort of arrested activity in their limbs, and stare with stony eyes. It is this false semblance of life in death that makes it dreadful for divers to enter the cabins of sunken ships and find themselves alone amongst the drowned, and it is this which gave such horror to the reapparition of Caraccioli's body, whom Nelson mercilessly refused to save from a hurried condemnation. The body, we are told, rose from the bottom of the sea, the cannon-shot fastened to its legs serving only as ballast to keep it upright, as the wind wafted it towards Naples. In war, and in accidents, the dead are often seen in postures that no artist would invent for them, and their faces assume the strangest expressions. All this is mere chance and signifies nothing, but the boldest of us does not like to be stared at by a corpse.

When art sets itself to tell the whole truth, it may undertake the representation of these and other facts as a sort of conscientious duty. A higher view of truth relieves art from any such obligation. For what is the fundamental verity about death? It is that the dead body neither enjoys nor suffers, that the dead eye does not see, the dead brain does not weary itself by thinking. If, then, there is an appearance of suffering or of effort, it is an entirely delusive appearance. When the eyes of a corpse have been closed by the kindly hands of the living, there is more truth, in the higher sense, in the closed lids than there is in the appearance of seeing; and when the body has been laid out in perfect rest, there is more truth than in the tossed arms of the stiffened soldier on the battlefield. Even the appearance

A DEAD LADY

DRAWING BY N. F. O. TASSAERT

REPRODUCED IN HÉLIOGRAVURE BY P. DUJARDIN

A STUDY of death which is absolutely truthful, without being in any way repulsive.

This, indeed, is the last and complete sleep. One has only to look at the drawing for a minute, to feel the peculiar sensation that comes upon us when we gaze upon a corpse, expecting it to stir, and it does not stir; expecting it to breathe, and it does not breathe. Then, if one gazes long, there come moments almost of illusion; it seems as if that perfect stillness had been for an instant broken, yet it is never broken. The only motions henceforth will be the slow changes of decay, and these it is not good for the living to think about or look upon. Let them, rather, revert to the past of the earthly life that is ended, or dream of the "distant Aidenn."

of serenity itself is delusive, if we attribute the consciousness of serenity to the dead.

The elder Leslie once wrote a chapter on the beauty of death. Not only does it sometimes increase beauty for a few hours, but when the dead person is old it may make the face look younger by many years. In one case that came under my own observation a very old person resumed, after death, the appearance of middle age, and there was even a suggestion or reminiscence of what she had been in her prime. When death occurs before youth is past, and when the dead person has been beautiful in life, there may come, for a very brief space of time, a kind of idealisation, answering to the beautiful light of the afterglow when the sun has left the landscape. No funeral can be so touching as that of a fair maiden in Greece, where her body, carefully dressed, adorned with flowers, and exposed to the mournful gaze of many sympathising spectators, is borne tenderly to her last resting-place in the clear summer twilight of Attica—

"The life still there upon her hair—the death upon her eyes."

INDEX

ACTION not desirable in a picture, 336.
Actor compared to artist, 13.
Albert monument, 110.
Allegory in art, 338.
Amateur, the, defined, 45.
Angelico, Fra, 69, 70.
Angels as treated in art, 96 *seq.*
Andrea del Sarto, his early apprenticeship, 9.
Arnold Matthew, 114; on culture, 18; on education, 25, 26.
Art contains little positive doctrine, 3; a Proteus, 4; is to some extent scientific, 4, 18; is a good deal influenced by theory, 7; professional preferences in, 15; an antithesis to science, 17; "Grand Art," 21; invention and taste required in art as in literature, 27; is not always civilising, 32; is not imitation, 53 *seq.*; invention in, 54, 55; does not require finished imitation, 56; greater than beauty, 87; that of painting united to the other arts in early times, 118; early art decorative, 119; encouraged by Roman Catholics, 139; has no purpose beyond itself, 174.
Artistic interests in life conflict with the human, 5; spirit akin to the religious, 24; instinct, 288.
Artist, defined, an, 46.
Artists, their education, 6; members of a liberal profession, 6 *seq.*; their struggle for technical excellence, 15; may be amateurs, 47; their indifference to dates, 172.
Atkinson, his *Art Tour in Northern Capitals*, 76 note.

BAFFIER, J., a realist in bas-relief, 305.
Bagehot, Mr., on costume, 243, 244.
Barante, his *History of the Dukes of Burgundy*, quoted, 200.
Bartholdi, 106.
Bartolommeo, Fra, 9.
Bas-relief, a good medium for realism, 305.
Beauty non-existent like sound and colour, 60; a search for it is the least vain among human pursuits, 63; not clearly separated from interest, 65; must exhibit unity, 68; its enjoyment a serious pleasure, 72; is not popular, 88.
Beard in sculpture, 274.
Behnes, his studio haunted by Mr. Watts, 48.
Bell, Sir Charles, on *The Anatomy of Expression*, 336.
Bellini, John, 113.
Black Virgin at Dijon, 119, 141.
Blake, William, his theology, 105, 106.
Blanc, Charles, 28, 150; on Delacroix, 12.
Boats and ships good objects in which to study beauty, 68, 69.
Body is not the man, 262.
Bonheur, Rosa, 294, 303, 306, 307.
Bonheurs, the, 295.
Bonnat, his "Renan," 228, 267.
Borgognone, 69, 70, 234.
Botticelli, 35; his commentary on Dante, 14; his foolish remarks on landscape, 23.
Boucher, painter, 84.
Boucher, sculptor, his "A la Terre," 303.
Boughton, G. H., 205.
Bourgeois prosperity appeals to art, 331.
Breton, M. Jules, 295, 307; quoted, 296, 299.
Brett, Mr., 190.
Bucolic subjects: their effects on art summarised, 309; in sculpture, 304.
Buisson, M. Jules, 86.

CALDERON, Mr., 31.
Canaletti, 46.
Carpeaux, 43, 223.
Castiglione, 83.
Chantrey, 34.
Chartran, 248; his Leo XIII., 247.
Chauchard, 88 note.
Christ absent in a picture of The Last Supper, 205.
Christianity, its types of manhood, 96; may be legitimately artistic, 103.
Chryselephantine statue, the, 75 *seq.*
Churches allow secular but not religious monuments within their walls, 143.
Civilisation among English and French students, 31.
Classic caste unfavourable to bucolic art, 305.

Claude, 34, 202, 334; not much educated, 9; his figures, 284.
Clouet, 242.
Collier, Mr. John, 213, 256, his *Primer of Art*, 17, 18; quoted, 192 note.
Colour in painting is a personal matter, 55.
Comte, his "Récréation de Louis XI." 200.
Constable, 34, 192.
Constant, Benjamin, 206.
Cooke, Edward, 20.
Cormon, his "Cain," 167, 168.
Corot, 34, 35, 45, 52, 202, 334.
Correa, Rafael, 294.
Correggio, 298.
Cossa, Francesco della, 118.
Couture, 45.
Courbet, 84, 295.
Courtois, 221.
Cox, 202.
Critic, his idiosyncrasy important, 4.
Crivelli, Carlo, 109.
Crucifixion not treated in the catacombs, 107.
Cruikshank, 175.

D'ACHE, Caran, 327.
Damman, M., 308.
Darwinism will not affect the fine arts, 170.
David, 46, 73, 204; his school, 8; he taught Ingres, 12; disliked by the English, 199.
Delacroix, Eugène: his culture, 12; he objects to copying Nature, 13 note.
Delaroche, 204.
Delaunay, Elie, 247.
De Neuville, 314.
Delécluze, M., on the School of David, 8.
Desnoyers, Auguste, the engraver, 248.
De Troy, 247.
D'Illzac, Ringel, 223.
Dirt inevitable in war, 313; and helpful to art, 314.
Doré, Gustave, 334.
Dow, Gerard, 237.
Drevet, 246, 247.
Dupré, Jules, 48.
Durand, Amand-, 308.
Dürer, Albert, 86, 100, 284; his accuracy, 19, 266; an apology to, 19; his ineffectiveness, 20; his hair, 276; his "Prodigal Son," 307.
Duran, Carolus, 212 note.
Dys, Habert, 85.

EDELFELT, 157.
Edelinck, 246, 247.
Education, the handicraft theory of, 8.
Etching a good medium for the representation of hair, 276.
Etty, 30, 44.
Eyck Van, see *Van Eyck*.

FIGURES offer material for *positive* study, 51; their study leads to firm knowledge, 52; their judicious arrangement in a picture produces dignity, 135.
Fildes, 29; his "Widower," 90; his "Empty Chair," 205.
Flameng, F., 194, 256.
Flandrin, 226.
Flaxman, 89, 90.
Francia, his "Melancholy Young Man," 337.
French, their system good for technique, 27; their students very disorderly, 31; their modern dress, 254.
Frère, Edouard, 295.
Frith, his "Derby Day" and "Railway Station," 92.
Fromentin, 73, 301.
Furniss, Harry, 86.

GAILLARD, Ferdinand, 122, 256, 257.
Gainsborough, 212, 275.
Garnier, M. Jules, 185.
Gérard, 316; his "Napoleon," 248.
Géricault, 46, 48.
Gérôme, 77 note; his "Grand Piscine de Brousse," 42.
Ghirlandajo, Domenico, 65, 266.
Gilbert, Sir J., 70, 91, 194.
Giotto, 110.
Gods, they were not men, 95; but represented types of manhood, 96.
Gothic in art, taken as religious, 126, 127.
Grant, Sir Francis, 263, 329.
Gros, his "Buonaparte," 203.
Guérin, 48.
Guillaume, M., on education, 15.
Gusman, M., his "Silenus," 253.

HALS, Frans, 237.
Hamerton, P. G., his *Landscape* and *The Graphic Arts*, 3; his apology to Dürer, 19; his *Wenderholme*, 159.
Hand, the, in portraiture, 265 *seq.*
Haydon, 194, 201.
Hayller, James, 201.
Hilton, 176, 201.
Hogarth, 177.
Holbein, 172, 220, 236, 241; his "Erasmus," 266.
Hole, 242, 263.
Horsfall, T. C., 64.
Hunt, W. M., 45.
Human interests conflict with the artistic, 5; but have their influence on art, 282.
Humanity and landscape present different ideals to the painter, 284 *seq.*

IDEALISM, its absence produces indecency, 41; cannot be understood by the people, 128, 129.
Imitation is not art, 53 *seq.*
Impressionists, 265, 266.
Ingres, 28, 30, 34, 192, 193, 258; a musician, 12; his "St. Symphorien," 21; his opinion of the relative importance of

colour and drawing, 28, 29; his "Œdipus," 44.
Invention, the pleasures of, 259.
Israels, Joseph, 89, 90.

JACQUES, Charles, 303.
Jews object to any art founded on study of the body, 263.
Jordaens, 84.

KNOWLEDGE is not necessarily scientific, 18; such scientific knowledge is often absent in great masters, 18, 19; is not mastery, 50.

LABRE, 121.
Landseer, Sir Edwin, 46, 189, 193; right in his painting of war, 314, 315; a favourite with the upper classes, 329.
Larochefoucauld, 132.
Laurens, Jean Paul, 190, 194, 195, 206, 338.
Legros, an interpreter of religious feeling, 158.
Leighton, Sir F., 28, 83, 86; his "Arts of War" and "Arts of Peace," 5; an idealist, 41; his knowledge of modern languages, 11; his portrait of Sir Richard Burton, 257.
Leloir, M. Maurice, 175, 176.
Lepage, Bastien, 295.
Leslie, 34, 189, 339; his acquaintance with literature, 13; his portrait of Constable, 258.
Lewis, John, 134.
Lhermitte, 295, 309.
Linnell, 285.
Lionardo, see *Vinci*, Lionardo da.
Littré, 89; his definition of the liberal arts, 6.
Liotard, the pastellist, 277.
Lithography, is suitable for rustic subjects, 308.
Lockhart, his "Jubilee Service in Westminster Abbey," 182, 183.
Loustaunau, 20.
Lucas of Leyden, 308; his "Milkwoman," 307.

MACLISE, his "Lamb," 265.
Maes, his "The Cradle," 70.
Man seldom reaches physical perfection, 85.
Man in Art, the immensity of the subject, 3; may lead to man as he is in reality, 5; the true *Man* in *Art*, 257.
Manet, his "Olympia," 41.
Meissonier, 52, 88 note, 177, 273, 275, 276, 308; anecdotes of, 181, 182; his "La Rixe," 336.
Michael Angelo, 9, 34, 140, 141, 260, 266, 275, 318; his "Jehovah," 104; his "Moses," 260; his "Soldiers bathing in the Arno," 314; not the best subject for an essay, 334.
Millais, Sir John, 213, 275; his "Gladstone," 275.
Millet, Jean François, 29, 84, 91, 295, 298, 300, 301, 308, 318; his "Angelus," 159 and note; his views of the peasantry, 288-292; his "The Gleaners," 309 note.
Model, morality necessary to a, 37; anecdote of one who left £8000 to art, 37.
Monet, Claude, 192.
Moore, Mr. Barlow, 190.
Morison, Mr. James Cotter, 105.
Müntz, M., 37.
Munkacsy, his "Milton," 184.
Murillo, 255.
Music is pure invention, 55.

NATURE, the study of it is neutral, 37; its imperfections, 38.
Nude, the, is good for study, but inadequate as a representation of man, 4; the objections to it largely conventional, 33; its influence on landscape, 34; only permissible in finished works of art when elevated by idealisation, 43, 44.

OSTADE, 300.
Ouless, 220, 256.

PAINTING, a mixed art, 8.
Palmer, Samuel, 12, 308.
Parker, Mr., on the fine arts, 7, 8, 14.
Peasantry, the characteristics of their life are being destroyed, 297; are most perfect in France, 292, 293.
Pen shading, 28.
Perugino, 111, 112, 113; an uneducated man, 9.
Phidias, his "Jupiter of Olympia," and "Pallas of the Parthenon," 75, 76.
Pointelin, M., an amateur, 49.
Pomp, now preserved only by the Papacy, 243; a conservative ideal, 243.
Portrait, the: trains the public in criticism, 220; only partially represents man, 231; may be an aid to government, 243; the state portrait flourished in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, 244; a royal portrait, 244; as treated before the Renascence, 250.
Potter, Paul, 301.
Poynter, Mr., 28, 31, 49, 177.
Processes and subjects, interinfluences, 302.
Pugin, 20.
Puvis de Chavannes, 130.

RAJON, 252, 256.
Raphael, 11, 28, 34, 36, 47, 61, 83, 84, 100, 109, 110, 118, 133, 147, 188, 192, 193, 284, 306, 318; his scholarship, according to M. Müntz, 9, 10; his opinion of the Gothic, 10; his ignorance of visual effect, 19; his conception of God, 104, 105; the Ansidei Raphael 120, 145; his biblical illustrations, 134 *seq.*; his Madonnas, 137.
Réalier-Dumas, M., 206.
Realism 40; in statues, 304; in bas-relief, 350.

Reform, a model, 269.
Religion akin to art, 24.
Rembrandt, 41, 83, 84, 172, 216, 218, 240, 241, 242, 267, 270, 275, 276, 283, 285, 293, 295, 331; his disregard of science, 18; his "The Bathers," 84; his religion, 147 *seq.*; his portraits of himself, 238, 239; a good subject for an essay, 334.
Renascence, 35.
Renan, Ary, 331.
Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 212, 242, 275, 284.
Rigaud, 245, his "Sebastian Bourdon," 246.
Riocreux, 48.
Rochegrosse, 321.
Rodin, 223.
Romanism, more artistic than Protestantism, 126.
Romney, 184.
Roqueplan, Camille, 48.
Rossetti, 26, 114, 190; more poet than artist, 11; his views of science in art, 17, 18; his romantic religion, 148.
Rubens, 13, 24, 117, 175, 235, 260, 275, 285, 318, 337; a good linguist, 10, 11, 12; his "The Three Graces," 84.

SATYR, the laughing, 43.
Scheffer, Ary, 219; the best modern religious painter, 123.
Seeley, Prof., on the irreligiousness of artists, 153.
Schalcken, 70.
Schoengauer, his "Flight into Egypt," 112.
Science, its hostility to and alliance with art, 4, 17, 18.
Sculpture, its idealism, 223; its influence on bucolic art, 304.
Skredsvig, 157.
Sphinx, the, 101, 102.
Stanfield, 181, 319.
Stippling, 28.
Stothard, 46.
Stott of Oldham, Mr., 91.

TADEMA, Alma, 50, 52, 69, 176; his learning, 11.
Teniers, 13, 202.
Tennyson, a perfect artist, 20, 25, 46, 48.
Thackeray on art, 17.
Tiepolo, 205.
Tinto, Dick, 212.
Tintoret, 214.
Titian, 47, 83, 216, 260, 274, 275, 284, 307, 318, 322; his lack of scientific knowledge, 18; his "Nymph and Satyr," 41.
Troyon, 48, 295, 303, 306.
Turner, 34, 45, 52, 133, 192, 202, 319, 322, 334; his indifference to science, 18; a born artist, 20, 46; described by Mr. Cosmo Monkhouse, 225; his figures, 284.

UGLINESS is not destructive of interest, 89.
Unger, the engraver, 168 note.

VANDEVELDE, William, 319.
Vandyke, 212, 241, 275.
Van Eyck, 118, 119, 298.
Van Marcke, 308.
Vasari, 153.
Vaudoyer, the architect of Versailles, 67.
Vecchio, Palma, 168.
Velasquez, 212, 264, 298, 318.
Venus of Arles, the, 73, 83, 87.
Vernet, Horace, 48, 317.
Veronese, Paul, 187, 188.
Vierge, 334; his "Pablo of Segovia," 336.
Vinci, Lionardo da, 24, 73, 86, 132, 140, 153, 154, 275; his sonnet, 10; his culture, 10, 11; his views on the study of anatomy, 22, and landscape, 23; his "La Vierge aux Rochers" and "Mona Lisa," 23; his portrait of Lucrezia Crivelli, 73; his *Treatise on Painting*, 334.
Vosmaer, 168 note, 330.

WALTNER, 308.
War, not much discussed in this book, 312; must be treated in detail by artists, 314; pictures of it are generally inferior, 316, 317; horrible only in its accidents, 324.
Ward, the Academician, 198, 202.
Watteau, 284.
Watts, 45, 48, 230, 252, 256; his "B.C," 165; his "Hugh Lupus," 260, his "Lord Lawrence," 257.
Wilson, 282.
Wings in art, 96, 97.
Winterhalter, 329.
Wolff, Mr., 190.
Woltmann, 108.
Women students and artists, 38, 39.
Woolner, 274; more sculptor than poet, 12; his statue of Bacon, 43.
Work when acted not real; produces the effect of dignity in a portrait, 245.

ZURBARAN, 318.

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